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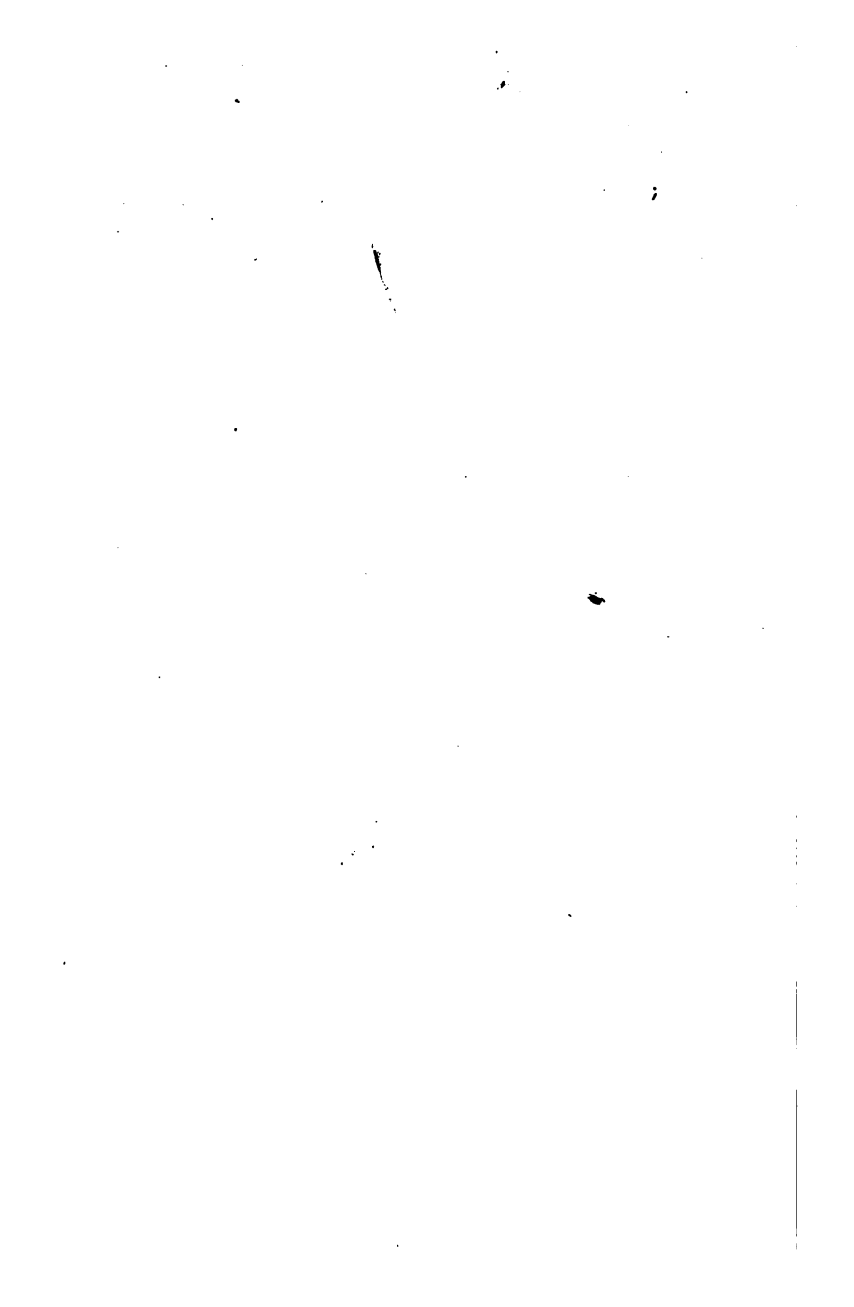
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THE
VILLAGE INNKEEPER.



“ Her father's voice was heard before the door ; she saw him bowing and making polite gestures to three young men in sporting dress.”

FRONTISPIECE.— Page 38.

WILLIAM

GOVERNMENT

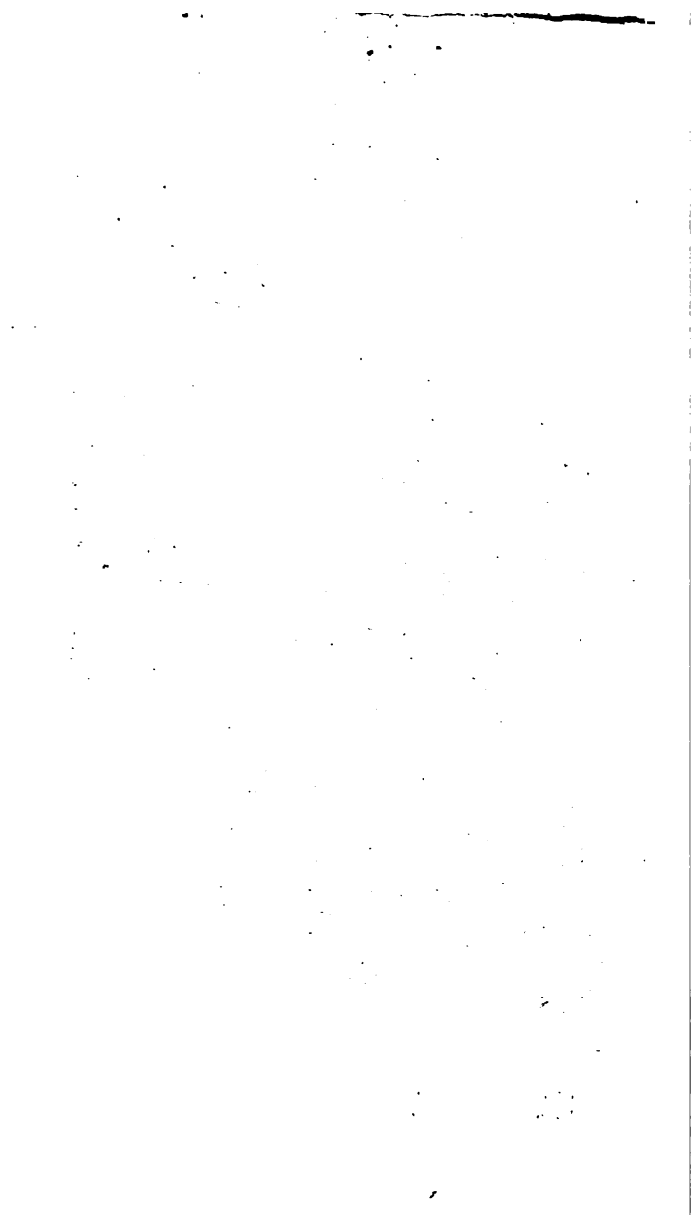
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THE
VILLAGE INNKEEPER.

BY
HOPE INSLOW,

AUTHOR OF "THE MISER," ETC.

ILLUSTRATED.

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THE
VILLAGE INNKEEPER.

INTRODUCTION.

IN a village in the neighbourhood of Antwerp, between Hoogstraten and Calmpthout, dwelt Peter Gansendonck, the landlord of the inn St. Sebastian. I knew him in the year 1830, at which time I was a soldier. However, I do not remember much about him then, except that he could not endure soldiers or peasants, and above everything, delighted in being concerned with officers. He was very angry with the burgomaster, because he had taken the captain of the company into his own house, lodged the other three officers with the baron, the lawyer, and the doctor, and had only left him, Peter Gansendonck, to entertain the sergeant-major, your very humble servant.

I remember that I often passed my leisure hours in making all kinds of playthings for little Lisa, the innkeeper's daughter, who was nearly five years old. The child was delicate, and seemed likely to die of consumption, but her face, though pale, was so bewitching, her silvery voice had such sweet tones, that I felt a sort of happiness in comforting and amusing the little invalid with games, songs, or tales.

I remember, too, what sorrowful cries burst from Lisa, what bitter tears bathed her cheeks when the drums beat the farewell call, and her kind friend was standing with his knapsack on his back, ready to leave her for ever.

But such impressions are so quickly effaced in the young. I soon thought no more about little Lisa, and no doubt the child completely forgot me.

A little time ago, my chance rambles in the neighbourhood of Antwerp brought me back, for the first time, into the same village. I entered it without a presentiment, without the least expectation.

However, no sooner had I recovered from the depths of my memory the image of the church, houses, and trees, than a happy smile of surprise brightened my face, and my breast swelled with joyous emotion. The sight of the old sign at the inn especially made my heart beat ; I hung my head and stood still for an instant, to follow the course of youthful memories, which swept over my mind like a warm and perfumed wave.

How much of love and power there must be in the soul in our youthful days, to enable it to comprehend for ever within itself, everything which surrounds it, and to envelope all with affection like an imperishable veil. Men, trees, houses, words, all—animate or inanimate—all become a part of our being : to each object we attach a remembrance as beautiful, as sweet as our youth itself. The mind overflows with vigour, it throws out the sparks and reflections of its life over all creation, and whilst we greet, with a joyous and ceaseless hymn, the happiness which, for us children or young people, smiles

over everything in a boundless future, all nature sings and rejoices in unison with us.

Oh, how I love the heath, the lime-tree, the farm, the church, and everything which spoke to me at the time when the roses of my youth and the lilies of the chaste poetry of my early years, crowned my forehead. They have shared all my joys ; I have seen them develope fully, and shine under the warm light of the sun, when, in my glad carelessness, I started on the unknown road of human destiny. These are my old playfellows, my friends. Each brings back to me a pleasant recollection, a tender emotion ; they speak the language of my heart ; all the most delicate fibres of my being vibrate to their call with youthful energy, and, with a calm and religious feeling, I thank the Lord for allowing to flow, even in the frozen heart of a man, the blessed stream of memory.

Before the door of the old inn, I seemed to be carried back, as if by magic, to better times ; I saw once again my comrades, my officers ; the drum beat in the distance ; I heard the warlike

command ; the inspiring war-song rose above the humble and retired dwellings ; the huntsman's bugle resounded in the shade of the linden trees but in the midst of all this, there appeared to me, even more clearly and more exactly still, the calm and angelic face of Lisa, smiling upon me from the shadows of the past.

Human thought traverses the world of memory, even more rapidly than lightning the expanse of the heavens. I had scarcely paused a minute, and already five beautiful months of my life had passed glittering before my eyes.

I advanced towards the inn, doubling my speed, my mind eager, my face joyous I am going to see Lisa, I said to myself ; she will not recognise me, I know, for the child must have become a lovely girl ; but nothing will gladden me like the sight of her She was ill and languishing, perhaps she lies under the ground in the peaceful cemetery ! Away with such a sad thought, thrown by cold reason into the midst of my glowing recollections.

But how strange and sad everything seems to me in the inn St. Sebastian. All is changed, men and things. Where is Peter Gansendonck? Where is Lisa? Where is the table on which I have enjoyed with my comrades so many pints of beer? All has disappeared.

Poor Lisa, I can still see near the window the corner where you used to rest your little head on your mother's knee, where I amused you with a cardboard carriage drawn by four beetles, and your languid countenance thanked me for my kindness.

I had so entirely forgotton it all, I did not even know that I had ever been in the village; but now from each thing bursts forth a picture, from each thing a voice. I see it all again, hear it all, everything becomes once more young and smiling, even my heart, for it is in harmonious agreement with this known and beloved nature.

Gentle Lisa! who would have thought, then, that I should one day tell your history to my countrymen, as I long ago amused you by childish tales.

Life resembles those large American rivers, which for some time flow peaceably between two smiling banks, and then are suddenly precipitated from the top of a mountain, and are lost with the crash of a tempest in howling whirlpools, whence their waves issue broken and foaming. Man is the bit of straw floating on the torrent; the calm voyage between the flowery banks is youth; the dreadful torrent, the devouring gulf, is human society, into which man is thrown like the piece of straw: it falls, it sinks, even to the bottom; it returns to the surface, it is buried again, it is tossed about, bruised, tormented, broken Who can tell on what shore the poor piece of straw will be thrown at last?

I.

SET A BEGGAR ON HORSEBACK, AND HE WILL
RIDE TO THE DEVIL.

PETER GANSENDONCK was a singular man. Although he had sprung from one of the humblest families in the village, he became possessed very early in life of the notion that he was made of finer stuff than the other peasants ; that he alone knew more than a great many learned men put together ; that if the affairs of the parish were involved, it was only because, notwithstanding his powerful intellect, he was not mayor ; and many other things of the same kind.

And yet the poor man could neither read nor write, and had never had much learning to forget but he had so *much* money.

In this respect, at least, he resembled many other people whose minds are also found locked

up in a strong box, and whose wisdom, put out to interest at five per cent., returns each year into their brains with the interest. The villagers, wounded daily by Gansendonck's consequential pride, gradually conceived an intense dislike for him.

The landlord of the St. Sebastian was a widower, and had only one child. This was a daughter of eighteen or nineteen. Although she was delicate and pale, her features were so pure and refined, her character so gentle and amiable, that she had taken the fancy of several young men. According to her father's presumptuous notions, she was much too good, too well educated, and too beautiful, to marry a peasant's son. For some years he sent her to a celebrated school, that she might learn French, and there acquire manners in accordance with the high destiny which awaited her.

Happily Lisa, or Lisette as the peasants called her, had returned simple and ingenuous. Although the seeds of vanity and folly had been sown in her mind, her natural purity of heart

had smothered those germs of evil ; and even over the traces of them which might remain, her maidenly innocence threw a charm which caused everything to be excused.

According to custom, she had only received a half education. She understood French tolerably, but only spoke it imperfectly. However, she knew how to embroider exquisitely, how to make slippers and footstools in many colours, to knit with beads, to make paper flowers, to say the most courteous "*Good morning*," to bow and courtesy, to dance according to all the rules of the art ; and she possessed a thousand other accomplishments which, as says the proverb, were in her father's rustic dwelling like a jewel of gold in a swine's snout.

From her childhood, Lisa had been intended to marry Karel, the brewer's son ; a fine young fellow, and besides well off for a villager, and tolerably educated, since he had spent some years at the college of Hoogstraten.

And yet study had but little changed him. He loved the unrestrained freedom of a country

life ; he was full of life and gaiety, as joyous as a chaffinch, and drank and sang in all good faith with his friends and companions.

His father's early death had compelled him to leave college, to come and take care of his mother and to manage the brewery ; and the good woman thanked God day by day for having left for her comfort so good a son, and indeed there was not a more active or kind young man.

Lisa's presence alone caused Karel to lose his free vivacity. Before her he became grave and thoughtful. Seated near her he was a child, taking pleasure in her lightest occupations, and anticipating her smallest wishes with careful attention. His *fiancée* was so weak and delicate, but she was also very beautiful ! The strong and spirited youth surrounded the frail young girl with respect, with deference, and with anxious care, as if the life of a drooping flower had been entrusted to him.

For some five or six months Gansendonck had seen no great harm in his daughter becoming Karel's wife. It is true that this union had

never fully satisfied his pride; but as, in his opinion, the rich son of a brewer was not, upon the whole, a peasant, he had not wished to break off an engagement of so long a date, and had even consented that things should be prepared and put in train for the approaching marriage.

The young people's engagement was then on a tolerably secure footing, when Gansendonck's brother—a brother who was not married—died after a short illness, and left a fine property, which was soon handed over to the innkeeper in hard cash.

Peter Gansendonck, like many others, was of the opinion that the mind, the nobility, the superiority of the man must be measured by the money that he possesses; and although he did not understand English, he was still prone to regard that sublime British thought as giving a satisfactory and irrefragable answer to all : *How much money is the man worth?* This is also elsewhere expressed by the old Flemish proverb—“Money, which is dumb, makes straight that which is crooked, and gives mind to the fool.”

It is needless to say that with such notions his pride, or rather his folly, was increased even more than his fortune. He considered himself now the equal at least of the baron who lived near the village ; for he conscientiously believed that he was worth as much as that noble proprietor.

Dating from that time, he raised his head higher, and believed himself one of the first men of the country. He often dreamed the whole night that he sprang of a noble race, and he even during the day constantly deluded and pampered his mind with this flattering thought. In order to strengthen himself in the opinion that he had of the excellence of his origin, he often tried to discover what difference there was between a gentleman and himself, but in reality he could find none.

His conscience, indeed, told him from time to time that he was too old to learn French, to change his whole manner of living, and to effect his entrance into first-rate society. But if he himself could achieve no more, his daughter, at

least, was in a position to rise in rank in the world, and to marry the best amongst the first barons. What a happy certainty for him! Before he died he should have the pleasure of hearing his Lisa called the Baroness! He himself would be grandfather to some little barons!

It will easily be understood that from this time Karel's love began to vex him sorely, and that in his secret heart he accused the happy lad of being an obstacle in his daughter's future. Already he had spoken of Karel in Lisa's presence with contemptuous bitterness, and said things which had so wounded the young girl, that for the first time in her life she had angrily rebelled against her father, and in secret wept bitterly.

Not to grieve his daughter, he abstained from all direct attack against the brewer's love, but he promised himself to retard the marriage by various expedients, until such time as he could open Lisa's eyes, and convince her that Karel was nothing but a vulgar peasant like the rest.

II.

Cheerly, boys ; be brisk awhile, and the longer liver take all.—SHAKSPEARE.

FROM daybreak the servants and day-labourers had been busy with their accustomed work in the inn yard of the St. Sebastian. Theresa, the milkmaid, was washing near the well some mangel wurzel for the cattle ; in the barn the measured beat of the flails was heard ; the stable-boy was singing a homely ditty whilst grooming the horses.

One man only walked up and down smoking his pipe, and pausing here and there to look at the others working. He also was dressed like a workman, wore a jacket and sabots on his feet. Although his face attested the calm tranquillity of thoughtless ease, there nevertheless might have been observed in his eyes a certain expression of cunning.

The girl left her mangel wurzel and drew near the barn, where the thrashers were busy spreading out on the floor some new sheaves, and availing themselves of the opportunity to exchange a word or two whilst working. The man with the pipe stood still and looked on. "Jack! Jack!" cried the dairy-maid to him, "you have found out a good receipt! We kill ourselves with working like slaves from morning till night, and only receive in return abuses flung at our heads: you lounge about; you smoke your pipe; you are the friend of the master; you have all the tit bits. You may say that your bread has fallen into honey. The proverb speaks the truth—To deceive people it needs but to know them."

Jack smiled, and answered,—

"To have is to have; but to gain what one has not, that is art! Good fortune flies; he who catches it holds it tight."

"Creep up his sleeve; deceive, flatter, cringe," grumbled one of the workmen, bitterly.

"Words are not reasons," said Jack, jeering.

“Every one is in the world to do good to his father’s son, and what is found must be picked up.”

“I should be ashamed to do what you do,” exclaimed the angry workman. “It is easy to cut thongs from other peoples’ leather ; but the pig gets fat without working.”

“One dog sees another enter the kitchen with pain,” said Jack, laughing. “When the shares are unequal, brothers quarrel ; but it’s better worth while to be envied than to complain ; and since one must sit down somewhere in the world, I like better to do it on a cushion than on thorns.”

“Be silent, toady, and remember that it is by our sweat you grow so fat.”

“Man, man, why bite me thus ? You can’t bear that the sun should shine on my pond. Don’t you know the proverb ?—Who envies another devours his own heart, and wastes his time. If I received less, would you have more ? Am I proud ? Do I hurt you ? On the contrary, I warn you when the master is coming, and I often pass you a good jug of beer through

the hole in the cellar. You are seeking what is not lost, man!"

"Yes, yes, we know your generosity; you are like the priest who blesses the whole world, but himself first."

"He is right, and so am I. Who serves the altar, must live by the altar."

"That's true," exclaimed another workman. "Jack is a good fellow, and I should very much like to be in his shoes. I should get my bread then by whispering to the crows through clouds of smoke: when the belly's full the heart's at rest."

"Let them talk, Jack," said another. "Everybody can't have a good star above them; for my part, I say that you are very clever."

"Not more than the fungus which is up there on the cherry-tree," answered Jack, with affected modesty.

All observed, with surprise, a large fungus growing between the strongest branches of the cherry-tree; but the eyes immediately returned to Jack to ask from him, according to custom,

one of those joking explanations of which he was lavish.

"Oh, oh!" exclaimed the dairy-maid; "not more mind than a fungus! Then you must be a terrible blockhead!"

"That's because you don't know. What says the proverb?—Work is the lot of fools. I do nothing."

"But what has the mushroom to do with all this?"

"It is a riddle, you see. The fine, large cherry-tree is our master. . . ."

"Flatterer, go!" exclaimed the servant girl.

"And I am the poor and humble fungus."

"Hypocrite!" growled the fault-finding workman.

"And so you have managed to guess the riddle. You will learn that little dogs must eat off the same plate with large ones without biting."

Jack would have liked to continue aggravating his auditors by words of a double meaning; but he heard the master's voice inside the inn, and

putting his pipe away in the case, he said to the workmen,—

“Come, my lads, take up your flails again. Here is our kind, good master coming to see how the work goes on. . . .”

“We are going to have our breakfast,” said the dairy-maid, running to the well.

“If he calls me again as he did yesterday, thief and thick-headed peasant, I’ll throw my flail at his head,” said one of the workmen, angrily.

“The pitcher wanted to fight with the stone, and it fell to pieces at the first shock,” said Jack, ironically.

“For my part I laugh at his big words, and I let him pour out all the abuse he knows,” said a second.

“You make the best of it, Ben. Open both your ears very wide, and what comes in at the one, will go out at the other. Besides, the master must have something for his money. Attend to him, and do what he tells you.”

“Do what he tells you, and if one can’t?”

“In that case attend to him all the same, and

don't do it, or rather say nothing. Act as if you knew nothing at all, and remember that there is nothing better than silence."

"Every man is a man! I laugh at his rudeness. Let him begin, and I, too, shall know how to show my teeth. He has no right to treat me like a beast, although I may be only a workman."

"What you say is very true, Andrew, and yet you are wrong," observed Jack. "Every one ought to have his own place in the world; and, then, a soft answer turns away wrath. If you want things to go better, remember that it is difficult to catch flies with vinegar, or hares by beating a drum. . . ."

"Jack! Jack!" cried a voice from the inside, with a marked accent of impatience.

"Look! just look at him, settling his face—the hypocrite!" said another thrasher, in a mocking tone.

"That's exactly the art that you won't learn," replied Jack; and then called out as if half frightened, "I am coming, I am coming; don't

be angry, my dear master, I am hastening, here I am."

"He gets his bread by playing the toad-eater," grumbled the provoked labourer. "I would rather thrash corn all my life. This is what comes of men who are slippery enough to get through anything."

"He was a soldier for ten years. It was then he learnt to play the simpleton and the buffoon, that he might work as little as possible. Afterwards he became a gentleman's servant, and that didn't help to harden his hands. . . . But what devilish riddle has he been giving us? Do you understand what he means?"

"Oh, it's easy to guess," replied the first. "He means to say that he has saddled himself on the master's back, and that he lives on him like the fungus on the cherry-tree. Come, come, let's go on thrashing."

III.

ALL IS NOT GOLD THAT GLITTERS.

"WELL, Jack, how do you like my new cap? How do I look in it?" asked Gansendonck of his servant.

The man drew back two or three steps, and rubbed his eyes like one overpowered with surprise at some incredible thing.

"Oh, sir!" he exclaimed, "tell me, is it indeed you? I thought I was looking at the baron. Good heavens! how ever can it be? Raise your head a little, sir; turn round a little more, sir; walk away a little now, sir. Do you know you are as exactly like the baron as one drop of water is"

"Jack," said the innkeeper, with pretended anger, "you want to flatter me, I don't like it."

"I know that, sir," answered the servant.

"There are few men who have less pride than I; although, from jealousy, people say that I am proud because I cannot endure peasants."

"You are right, sir. But believe me, I am still in doubt whether you are not the baron."

Joy sparkled in Gansendonck's eyes, with his head thrown back in a proud attitude, he looked smilingly at his servant, who continued making all kinds of gestures of surprise.

Jack had not altogether deceived his master; judging from the exterior, and without any regard to his stupid countenance, Gansendonck actually did resemble the baron. There was nothing surprising in that, for the last three months he had been striving to copy the clothes that the baron usually wore—a matter to which few paid any attention, because in the country the baron lived very unrestrainedly, and only wore the most ordinary costume.

But some weeks previously the baron had taken a fancy—and who does not? A magnificent water-spaniel belonging to him had died, and out of the animal's skin he had a fur cap

made. This pretty cap had so enchanted Gansendonck that he ordered one like it in the town. The cap displayed its numberless curls on the head of the landlord, who, since the flattering exclamation of his servant, could not sufficiently admire his reflection in the looking-glass. He prepared to go out.

"Jack," said he, "get my stick! we'll go through the village."

"Yes, sir," answered the servant, making a grimace, and following at his master's heels.

On the high road, bordered by houses, they met many of the villagers, who politely took off their hats or caps to Gansendonck, but burst out laughing as soon as he had passed.

Many of the people, too, ran from their stables, or to their doors, to admire the innkeeper's shaggy cap. The latter did not greet any one first, and walked with his head erect, and with a slow and majestic step. Jack, with his apparently foolish face, walked silently behind his master, and followed him in all his movements as faithfully and as patiently as if he were a dog.

All went well until they were before the forge, but there, there were several young men talking ; as soon as they saw the innkeeper they began to laugh so loudly, that they might have been heard through the whole street.

Francis, the blacksmith's son, well known as a great joker, began walking about before the forge, with his head thrown back, with measured steps, and so exactly mimicked Gansendonck that the latter was ready to burst with anger. Passing before the young blacksmith, he cast at him a furious glance, opening his eyes as if he would make them start from the socket ; but the blacksmith looked at him with such a provoking smile, that Gansendonck, half mad with passion, went on his way muttering and threatening, and disappeared in a bye lane.

"*Fool ! Fool !*" was called out behind him.

"Well, Jack, what say you to that peasant rabble ?" asked he, when his wrath was a little calmed. "They dare to laugh at me—to treat me like a madman—a man like me !"

"Yes, sir ; flies even sting a horse, and yet it is such a grand creature !"

"But I shall know them again, insolent fellows ! They'd better take care. They shall pay dear. I'll serve them out some of these days."

"No doubt, sir ; an opportunity deferred is not lost."

"I should indeed be a fool to have my horses shod, or to order anything else from the shameless blackguard."

"Yes, sir ; he who is too kind is half a fool."

"Nobody from my house shall set foot in his forge."

"No, sir."

"And then the mocker will be well caught, and gnaw his fingers, won't he ?"

"Undoubtedly, sir."

"But, Jack, I believe this scamp of a blacksmith is paid to annoy me and laugh at me. The police think, too, that it was he who, one night last May, wrote something on our sign."

“‘The moneyed donkey,’ sir.”

“It’s no good repeating their abominable coarseness !”

“No, sir.”

“You ought to give him a good thrashing privately, so that no one can see, and then make him my compliments.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Will you do it ?”

“The compliments ?—yes, sir.”

“No, the thrashing.”

“That means, that you would like me to come home without arms or legs. I am not very strong, sir, and the blacksmith is not a cat to get hold of without gloves.”

“Are you afraid of such a cowardly boaster ? You ought to be ashamed.”

“It is not well to fight with one who is tired of life. He that fights and runs away, will live to fight another day, says the proverb, sir.”

“Jack, Jack, I don’t think you’ll die of courage.”

“I hope not, sir.”

Whilst they were talking Gansendonck's anger blew over. Amongst many defects he still had one good quality, this, that although he very easily took offence, he forgot as quickly the offence given.

He had crossed some fir plantations and was walking over his own property, where he found numberless opportunities of giving fresh scope to his exaggerated sentiment of ownership, and to storm and rail at everybody. Here a cow had strayed, and, wandering from the pathway, had crossed his ground; there a goat had browsed a little on the foliage of his plantation; farther on he thought he discovered the steps of sportsmen and the track of the dogs.

This last circumstance particularly enraged him. He had had large posts placed at every corner of his fields, with the inscription—"No dogs allowed here;" and notwithstanding this, had any one been found so audacious as to violate his right of ownership?

In the midst of his anger, to which he was giving vent in a volley of oaths, he suddenly

perceived three sportsmen passing out from behind an oak-hedge, where they had been laughing and amusing themselves at the expense of Gansendonck and his servant. These three young men were in an elegant sporting costume, their guns under their arms.

One of them seemed to know the landlord of the St. Sebastian very well. He was explaining to his companions by what a singular demon of pride and self-sufficiency the good man was possessed, and was praising his daughter Lisa.

"Come, come," he exclaimed at last, "we are tired; let's have some fun. Follow me, we will accompany the innkeeper to the St. Sebastian, and empty a bottle there. But mind you speak to him with respect, and pay him great compliments. The more absurd they are the better."

Saying this, he jumped with his companions over a dry ditch, and walked quickly towards the innkeeper. He bowed profoundly to him, and greeted him with great politeness.

Peter Gansendonck took off his fur cap with both hands, and tried to behave to the young

man, as the latter had done to him. The two other sportsmen, instead of taking part in these demonstrations, had hidden themselves behind the servant, and were making great efforts to keep from laughing.

"Well, M. Adolphe, my dear sir," said the innkeeper, "how is your father? as stout as ever? He never comes to pay us a visit now, since he went away to live in town. But out of sight out of mind, says the proverb."

Adolphe took one of his laughing friends by the hand, and by force drew him before Gansendonck.

"M. Gansendonck," said he gravely, "I have the honour of introducing to you the young Baron Victor Van Bruinkasteel. But will you kindly excuse his infirmity? He has a nervous affection, a consequence of convulsions: he cannot look at anybody without bursting out laughing."

Victor could not contain himself; he threw back his head, stamped, and became purple with laughing.

"You'll spoil the whole concern," whispered Adolphe. "Have done, or he'll be finding out something."

Adolphe then took his friend's hand again, and repeated the introduction.

"M. Van Bruinkasteel has not the honour of knowing me," said the innkeeper, bowing.

"In fact," answered Victor, "I have the honour of being unknown to you."

"The honour is not great, sir," answered Gansendonck, bowing. "No doubt, sir, you have come to spend the shooting season at the Castle with our friend the Baron Adolphe."

"At your service, M. Gansendonck."

"His father has bought him the shooting-box," said Adolphe. "M. Van Bruinkasteel will be your neighbour every winter, and probably will often come and pay you a visit, M. Gansendonck."

"But M. Adolphe, my friend, why does the other gentleman stand behind Jack? Would he be afraid of me?"

"He is timid, M. Gansendonck; and what can

one do ? It is because he is so young. But, M. Gansendonck, by what I see, you preserve. You too, then, are a sportsman ? ”

“ I am an amateur. Am I not, Jack ? ”

“ Yes, sir, of hares. So am I provided it's not left to burn,” added he, aside.

“ What are you grumbling about ? ” exclaimed Gansendonck, angrily, to show the gentlemen that he had authority over his servants. “ What are you grumbling about, you rude man ? ”

“ I am asking if you don't think it is time to go home, sir ; and I am saying to myself that fishing and hunting make one hungry.”

“ When a pig dreams, it is of food. Hold your tongue ! ”

“ Yes, sir. To be silent and think hurts nobody.”

“ Not a word more, I tell you.”

“ No, sir.”

“ Gentlemen, will you do me the honour of coming to take a glass of wine with me this morning ? ” asked Gansendonck.

“ That is precisely what we were wishing to do.”

"Good ; come, then. You will tell me what you think of my light wine. Isn't it fine, Jack ? You have tasted it once, at least. If you don't smack your lips, gentlemen, say that I'm a peasant."

"You are right, sir," answered the servant.

The innkeeper set out with a majestic step, talking amicably to Adolphe, whilst the two friends of the latter walked behind, that they might give free course to their merriment. Jack gave sly glances at the four men, and would himself have joined in the laugh if the hare which he had been promised for dinner had not so run in his head that it gave him the stomach-ache.

The party advanced slowly towards the inn.

IV.

Oh, thou child of many prayers !
Life hath quicksands, Life hath snares !
Care and age come unawares.

LONGFELLOW.

IT was a magnificent morning. The sun shone in the sky like a glowing disc of gold, and spread rays of light over the whole heavens. This brilliant light, shining through the windows of the inn, fell on the alabaster forehead of a young girl.

Lisa Gansendonck was seated near the window. She was thinking, for her long black lashes were lowered, and a quiet smile played about her mouth, whilst now and then a slight blush tinged her pale cheeks, and evidenced the feeling which stirred her heart. Then suddenly she sat upright in her chair, a brighter light danced in her eyes, and her smile was more

decided, as if some happy thought had taken possession of her.

She took up a French Antwerp paper, which was open before her ; but, after having read a few lines, she fell back into her old attitude.

How lovely she was, like one of those charming creations which only belong to the land of dreams, as she sat there lighted by the warm rays of the morning sun, pale and delicate, young and pure, like a half-blown white rose. Short, vague sentences fell from her lips. She said sighing,—

“ Oh ! how happy people in the town must be? Such a ball. All those grand toilets, those diamonds, flowers in the hair, rich dresses, which must cost enough to buy half a village all shining with gold and light. And then the gentle manners, the beautiful language Oh, if I could see it, if it were only through the window.”

After a long reverie the attractive notion of a ball seemed to leave her. She went away from the table, and stood before a glass, looking

attentively at her own reflection, altering here and there a fold, passing her hand over her head, to give more gloss to her beautiful black hair.

However, she was very simply dressed, and no one certainly would have complained much of her toilet, if the smell of the stable, the smoky walls of the inn, and the pewter pots on the dresser had not proclaimed everywhere, that Mademoiselle Lisa was not in her place.

Her plain black silk dress had only one flounce; she wore a pink handkerchief which harmonised charmingly with the soft pallor of her face. Her hair was dressed in simple smooth bands, fastened up in a coronet of plaits at the back of her head.

After standing for some moments before the glass, she returned to the table and began to embroider a collar, but without paying much attention to it; her wandering glances proved that her thoughts were far from her work. Soon, still dreamily, she said, in a voice nearly inaudible.

"The sport is over, the gentlemen from the town will be returning. I must be polite to

them ; father says he will take me to town, and buy me a satin bonnet. I must not sit with my eyes cast down ; I must smile and look at them when the gentlemen speak to me. What does my father mean ? He says that I don't know to what it may lead But Karel—he seems vexed when I change my dress so often ; he is annoyed when strangers talk to me. What am I to do ? My father wishes it ; however, I can't be impolite to these people ; but still I don't want to vex Karel”

Her father's voice was heard before the door ; she saw him bowing and making polite gestures to three young men in sporting dress. A vivid blush overspread her face. Was it from pleasure or timidity ? Once more she passed her hand over the black bands of her hair, and remained sitting as if she had heard nothing.

Gansendonck entered with his companions, and exclaimed joyfully,—

“ See, gentlemen, here is my daughter. What say you to such a flower ? She is well educated ; she understands French, gentlemen ; there is as

much difference between my Lisa and a peasant, as between a cow and a wheelbarrow."

The servant burst out laughing.

"You clown!" exclaimed Gansendonck, in a passion; "what have you got to laugh at in that stupid way? Go away."

"Yes, sir."

Jack went and seated himself in the chimney corner, and began to inhale eagerly the smell of the hare, which came to him from the back kitchen in savoury whiffs. With his eye fixed on the fire, and his countenance apparently indifferent, he was listening to what was being said around him.

Whilst Lisa had risen and was exchanging sundry compliments in French with the young sportsmen, Gansendonck had gone down to the cellar. He soon returned with glasses and a bottle, which he set on the table before his daughter.

"Be seated, gentlemen, be seated," said he, "and pray talk French; I could spend a whole day listening to it, it always has the effect of a song upon me.

He took Victor by the arm, and made him seat himself by Lisa's side.

"Not so much ceremony, M. Van Bruinkasteel," he exclaimed ; "pray make yourself at home."

Lisa's beautiful and gentle face had at first inspired two of the young sportsmen with a kind of respect ; they were sitting on the other side of the table, and silently contemplating the fresh young girl who had so evidently endeavoured to appear polite, but whose startled modesty tinged her face with a vivid blush.

Victor Van Bruinkasteel was not so reserved ; he began boldly to lavish praises on the young girl, on her beauty, on her embroidery, on her manner of speaking French ; he knew how to flatter with so much grace and ability, without the least in the world departing from propriety, that Lisa listened dreamily as to a harmonious song.

Gansendonck, whose spirits rose at each compliment, and who entertained a certain predilec-

tion for Victor, rubbed his hands laughing, and saying to himself,—

“Nobody knows when a penny is tossed up on which side it will fall, and everything is possible but that it should remain in the air ; they would make a pretty couple.” Then aloud, “Come, gentlemen, drink a little more. To your health, M. Van Bruinkasteel. Go on speaking French I beg, don’t attend to me ; I can see in your eyes what you want to say.”

The young sportsmen appeared extremely amused. In fact, Lisa did not speak French well, but every word which came from her mouth was so delightfully ingenuous, the modest blush which tinged her cheeks was so charming, everything about her was so fresh and attractive, that the mere sound of her voice was sufficient to awake in the heart pleasurable emotions.

Victor, clever fop as he was, soon found out the weak side of Lisa’s character. He spoke to her of the new fashions, of beautiful toilets, of town life, painted in vivid colours balls and fêtes, and so well knew how to engross the

attention of the poor girl, that she scarcely knew where she was.

Gradually Victor became so bold that he went so far whilst talking as to take Lisa's hand as it were inadvertently.

Then only did the girl appear to wake up. All trembling she withdrew her hand, moved back her chair, and looked appealingly in her father's eyes. But the latter, beside himself with delight, cast at her a reproachful glance, and made her a sign to remain seated.

Lisa's repulsive movement surprised Victor; and turning away his head to conceal his embarrassment, he saw the servant standing at the corner of the hearth, and watching him in a threatening manner. He looked angrily at Gansendonck, and demanded,—

“What does that scoundrel mean by daring to look at me so insolently?”

“What does he mean?” vociferated the innkeeper. “We'll soon see. Jack!”

“What's the matter, sir?”

“Have you been looking insolently at M. Van

Bruinkasteel? Dare you laugh at him, you earth-worm?"

"I am laughing like a dog which has burnt his nose with mustard. I have burnt my hand, sir."

"For shame; you are even too stupid to dance before the devil! Get out!"

"Yes, sir."

The man left the room, slowly taking off his cap as awkwardly as if he were silly.

A moment after the effect of Victor's audacity was forgotten, the young men talked gallantly to Lisa, and the innkeeper invited them to come and visit his daughter again; there would always be a bottle of the best wine ready for them. Lisa recovered her liking for Victor's stupid nonsense, and said to herself that such words were worth a thousand times more than the vulgar conversation of the peasants which she heard every day.

A young man opened the back door, and entered the room, followed by the servant.

"A glass of beer, Jack, and draw one for yourself, too," said he.

This powerful-looking young man wore a blouse of fine blue cloth, a silk cravat, and a cap of otter skin. His fine, handsome, and regular face was burnt by the sun; his broad hands were those of a labourer; whilst his large, blue eyes, full of fire and life, awakened the thought that he was not less endowed in mind than in body.

At his entrance Lisa rose, and welcomed him with such a friendly and familiar smile, that two of the young sportsmen looked at him with surprise. Adolphe, the third, had known him a long time.

The innkeeper muttered some words in a pettish tone with an angry look, as if the presence of Karel, the brewer, was eminently unpleasant to him. He even stamped impatiently, and made no effort to hide his annoyance.

The young man scarcely seemed to observe it, his eyes were fixed on Lisa with a questioning look. The girl smiled at him again even more

sweetly and expressively than before ; only then did an expression of pleasure appear on Karel's face.

"Father !" said Lisa.

"That peasant's word again !" exclaimed Gansendonck.

"*Papa*," said Lisa, correcting herself, "is not Karel going to take a glass of wine with us ?"

"I have no objection ; he can take a glass from the cupboard," answered her father, shortly.

"I am much obliged to you, M. Gansendonck," said Karel, with a cutting smile. "I do not wish to have any wine this morning."

"No, better drink beer, young man, it will strengthen your head," said Gansendonck, with a mocking laugh, and the manner of a man who thinks he has said a good thing.

Karel was accustomed to rudeness from Gansendonck ; he allowed this attack to pass like others, and was preparing to seat himself opposite the servant at the other corner of the fire-place, but Lisa called him near her, and said to him,—

"Karel, there is a chair; sit down and talk with us a little."

Her father looked angrily at his daughter, and bit his lips with impatience. Karel none the less obeyed Lisa's friendly invitation, although he observed Gansendonck's insulting looks.

"You will have good sport this year, gentlemen," said he in Flemish, seating himself near Adolphe; "the hares and partridges abound."

"Indeed, I believe you," answered Adolphe; "however, this morning we have not had the chance of firing at anything, the dogs had no scent."

"I was pretty sure," exclaimed Gansendonck, in a mocking tone, "that he would be putting his spoke in the wheel, with his eternal Flemish. Now we shan't have a word more except about dogs and horses, cows and potatoes. Let him chatter, M. Van Bruinkasteel, and you speak French with our Lisa. I listen to that language with so much pleasure that I don't know how to find words to express it."

Karel began to laugh, shrugging his shoulders, and looked boldly at Victor. The latter seemed to have lost all his eloquence, and showed no inclination to pursue, in Karel's presence, his agreeable conversation with Lisa.

There was a moment of constrained silence. The innkeeper observed, with a kind of despair, that M. Van Bruinkasteel was beginning to get weary; so, casting a look of reproach at Karel,—

“M. Victor,” said he, “don’t pay any attention to him, he is our brewer, and a friend of the family, but he has nothing to say, though he thinks himself number *one*. Go on, M. Van Bruinkasteel. I observe that my daughter is agreeable to you, and that she smiles when you speak to her. If the brewer wishes to sulk, he can go and do it outside.”

Encouraged by these words, and perhaps wishing to annoy the young man, Victor leant towards Lisa; and whilst speaking to her, stared at her in a manner which, in good society, would not have been tolerated.

Karel turned pale, began to tremble, and

ground his teeth ; but he immediately suppressed these signs of suffering and anger. Nevertheless they were perceived by every one. Victor was startled, not that he was a coward, but he had been quite sufficiently impressed to have no more inclination for laughing or badinage. This incident increased Gansendonck's irritation ; he stamped, grumbling to himself. Lisa, who thought that it was only her father's unkind words which had wounded the young man, cast down her eyes, and seemed ready to cry. Karel sat still on his chair, rather pale and trembling, but his countenance calm again.

Suddenly Victor rose, took his gun, and said to his companions,—

“Come, let us have another turn at sport. Mademoiselle Lisa will, I hope, kindly forgive me if I have said anything which was not agreeable to her.”

“What's that ?” exclaimed Gansendonck. “What's that ? Everything that you said was perfect and accomplished. And I hope this will

not be the last time she will see you and listen to you."

"Mademoiselle Lisa perhaps thinks otherwise ; although my intention has been to show her respect and friendship."

Seeing that his daughter did not answer, the innkeeper got angry with her.

"Come, what does this stupid, ill-bred behaviour mean? Lisa, Lisa, why are you sitting there like a fool? Answer, and be quick about it."

Lisa rose, and said, in Flemish, coldly and politely,—

"M. Van Bruinkasteel, do not take it ill that something (not your words) has made me uncomfortable. All that you have had the kindness to say to me has been very pleasant, and if you do us the honour of coming to see us you will be always most welcome."

"That's it! that's it!" exclaimed Gansendonck, clapping his hands. "Ah, M. Van Bruinkasteel, she is a pearl of a girl. You don't know her yet. She can sing like a nightingale. Will you sit

down again for a little while? I am going to fetch another bottle."

"No, I must take my leave, otherwise the whole day will be gone. Thank you for your friendly reception."

"I am going with you part of the way, if these gentlemen will allow me," said the innkeeper. "I have, indeed, a small wood down there, near the road, which I am going to see."

The young men all declared that M. Gansendonck's society would be most agreeable; and left the inn with him, after polite farewells to Lisa. The servant followed his master.

As soon as the young people were alone, Lisa said in a gentle voice,—

"Karel, you must not be grieved because my father speaks to you rather rudely; you know quite well that he does not mean what he says."

The young man shook his head, and answered, "It is not that, Lisa, which troubles me."

"What is it then?" asked the girl with surprise.

"I can scarcely explain to you, Lisa. Your

mind is too fresh and pure to understand me. Let us rather be silent about it."

"No ; you must tell me."

"Well, I don't like these young city madcaps coming and showing off to you their insipid compliments. It slips so easily into things that are unbecoming, and in any case these fine French manners and gallant glances prove to me that they do not come to see you with the respect that a woman deserves."

"You are unjust, Karel," she said, in a reproachful tone. "These gentlemen said nothing unbecoming to me. On the contrary, by listening to them I learn how to behave and speak, so as not to pass for a peasant."

Karel silently hung his head, and a sorrowful sigh escaped him.

"Yes, I know," continued Lisa, "that you hate the people and customs of the town; but whatever you may think about it, it is impossible that I should be impolite. You are very wrong, Karel, to wish to make me dislike people who deserve more respect than others."

The girl pronounced these words with a certain bitterness ; Karel, seated opposite to her and still silent, looked at her earnestly with a peculiar expression. She felt that he was much grieved, although she could not understand why her words should cause such sadness. She took his hand, pressed it sympathetically, and resumed.

"But, Karel, I don't understand you. What do you wish me to do? If you were in my place how would you conduct yourself when strange gentlemen come and speak to you?"

"It is a matter of feeling, Lisa," the young man answered, shaking his head. "I do not myself know how to advise you ; but, for instance, when they are such fine compliment payers as these, I should answer them politely, but without allowing them to come and sit in a circle round me, and fill my ears with their vain words."

"But my father obliged me," cried Lisa, quite excited.

"People find a hundred reasons for rising when they don't wish to remain seated."

"So in your eyes I have behaved badly," said the girl, sobbing, her eyes suddenly overflowing with tears. "I have not conducted myself properly."

The young man drew her to him, and replied, in a beseeching tone,—

"Lisa, forgive me. You ought to be a little indulgent to me. It is not my fault that I love you so much. My heart is my master. I cannot keep it down. You are as beautiful and pure as a lily. I tremble at the thought that a doubtful word—an impure breath—might touch you. I love you with a respect—a veneration—full of anxiety. Is it, then, surprising that the languishing glances of these young coxcombs make me shudder? Oh, Lisa! you think that this feeling is blameable. Perhaps, indeed, it is; but, my darling, if you could know how it grieves me, you would pity the excess of my love; you would forgive me my dark thoughts, and you would comfort me in my sadness."

These words, spoken calmly and tenderly,

touched Lisa deeply. She answered gently, through her tears,—

“Oh, Karel, I don’t know what notions you have, but whatever they may be—as that which has passed troubles you—it shall not occur again. If, in future, gentlemen come, I will rise and go away into another room.”

“No, no, Lisa, that is not what I wish,” said Karel, with a sigh, half-ashamed of the result of his observations. Be polite and affable towards each, as is proper, even with the gentlemen who were here just now. You don’t understand me, my dear child. Act as before, but remember that some things grieve me. Don’t forget in these cases that your father is sometimes deceived, and take the sense of your own dignity as the guide of what you ought to do. I know how pure your heart is, Lisa. It matters little to me who comes here, but I wish you to be respected. The least neglect, the mere shadow of a want of respect towards you, wounds my heart cruelly.”

“But, Karel, you heard that M. Adolphe and

his friends are often coming here. I must speak to them and answer them, if I remain in the room with them. Shall you be grieved each time?"

Karel blushed; his conscience reproached him for the observations he had allowed himself to make; and he admired the *naïve* goodness of his love. He took her hand, and said to her with a sweet smile,—

"Lisa, I am a madman. Will you do me a kindness?"

"Certainly, Karel."

"Yes, but seriously, in all frankness. Forget this caprice of mine. Really it would trouble me now if I saw you change your conduct. And indeed, why should I ask it, since your father is master, and obliges you to act according to his wish."

"All right, Karel, you are reasonable now," said the girl. "I cannot be otherwise than polite; that's true, is it not? My father is master. In another way you are wrong. M. Van Bruinkasteel talked to me a long time."

Everything that he said was very proper, and, I like to acknowledge it, I listened with pleasure."

Karel felt a new weight oppress his heart, but he put down the returning feeling, and replied in an entreating tone,—

"Let us forget what has passed, my love. I have good news for you. My mother has at last given her consent ; we are going to enlarge our old house considerably ; on Monday the workmen will begin to dig the foundations. There will be a beautiful room for you to yourself, with a marble chimney-piece and pretty hangings. We will have a house with a private entrance, and a stable, where there will be a gig for you. So, dear Lisa, you will not have either to cross the brewery or sit at the general hearth. You will lead a quiet and happy life ; and you will have all that heart can wish. Does not that please you, dear ?"

"You are very kind, Karel," answered the girl. "I am grateful to you for so much affection and friendship, but I believe my father will speak to you of something better. Indeed, it

will please you too. He would like us to rent the little uninhabited house behind the château. It seems to me that this notion is not bad. In this way we should not be in the midst of the peasants ; and gradually we should make the acquaintance of people in good society."

"But, Lisa," said the young man, interrupting her impatiently, "how can you possibly dream of such a thing? I should be obliged to leave my mother. She is a widow, and has no one in the world but me ; and without considering her I would not on my own account do what you propose. I have worked from my childhood, and I must continue to work for my own satisfaction, for my health, and to ensure my mother's wellbeing and for you yourself, Lisa, that I may fill your life with every pleasure, and have the conviction that the fruit of my toil adds to your happiness."

"Oh, that certainly is not necessary," said Lisa, sighing ; "our parents have enough money and property."

"And then, Lisa, remember that we are now

amongst the first of our class. Your father is one of the principal proprietors in the neighbourhood; our brewery is not behind any other. Would I consent to become a *nouveau riche*, to put myself in the position of begging the friendship of proud people, and of making myself hated by my old companions, as a man who out of pride wishes to play the gentleman? No, Lisa, such a thing might flatter the self-love of some people, but it would humiliate and ruin me. Better be esteemed and loved amongst the peasants than be obnoxious to and despised by the gentry."

Lisa was going to answer this passionate speech of Karel's; but the servant opened the door, and hurriedly approaching the young man, said to him very quickly,—

"Karel, do you wish to have a dispute of an hour or two with the master? No. Get out of the way very quickly then, for he is furious with you. You must have trodden very hard on his corns. If you don't go, the house will be upside down."

“Oh, Karel,” said Lisa eagerly, and pressing the young man’s hand, “go until my father’s anger has passed away. This afternoon he will have forgotten it.”

The young brewer shook his head sadly, kissed his *fiancée*, and hastened to leave by the back door of the inn.

The servant followed him, and said to him as they walked away,—

“Fear nothing, Karel; I am on the watch, and will warn you if I see anything going wrong. But be quiet—the whim will pass off. The weathercock turns about like a fool at the top of the steeple, and yet it sometimes announces fine weather.”

V.

You can hear him swing his heavy sledge,
With measured beat and slow,
Like a sexton ringing the village bell,
When the evening sun is low.

LONGFELLOW.

TWO months passed away.

One morning, early, three or four young peasants were at the forge, talking of many things. Francis, the blacksmith, was holding with one hand a piece of iron in the fire, with the other using the bellows, at the same time whistling a slow ditty.

"Come, who has heard the news?" exclaimed one of the young men. "Lisa Gansendonck is going to marry a baron."

"Oh! oh!" said the blacksmith, laughing. "Next year Easter-day falls on a Wednesday. Come, come, sell your news at another market."

"Yes, she is going to be married to that young gentleman who for the last six or seven weeks has hardly been out of the inn."

"When that happens the moon will be green cheese."

"You don't believe it? Gansendonck told the lawyer himself."

"Then I believe it much less still."

"Do you know what I think? M. Gansendonck is busy brewing very bitter beer for himself. There are all sorts of strange rumours about Mademoiselle Lisa. People speak of her as Jews do of bacon."

"Her foolish father will only get what he deserves, and that flirting doll much the same. They who play with the cat will get scratched, says the proverb."

"And that unhappy Karel, who is stupid enough to make a trouble of it. I should leave her alone to carry on with her baron."

"There's Karel coming this way," said one of the young men, who was standing near the door.

"Even at this distance one can see that he is

melancholy; he walks with his chin on his chest, as if he were looking for pins. He might be carrying the spade that's to dig his own grave on his back."

They looked out and saw Karel walking slowly along the road, his eyes cast down, dreamy and absent.

Francis struck his hammer violently on the anvil as if some sudden passion had taken possession of him.

"What's the matter with you?" asked the others.

"When I see Karel my blood boils," exclaimed Francis. "I would agree to go a whole year without one pint of beer, if I might in private have a turn at forging on Gansendonck's back. The proud blockhead. Through his stupid crotchets he will sacrifice his daughter's honour; and she deserves no better, the vain fool. But that it should make my friend Karel die of grief, that it should send him to his grave . . . a fellow as strong as an oak, rich, educated, and with a good heart; who is worth a hundred Gansendoncks,

and a hundred coquettes, that's what I can't stomach. Observe, I don't wish harm to anybody; but if by chance Gansendonck were to break his neck, I should regard it as a punishment from God."

"Be quiet, Francis, punishment always comes at the proper time. When the ant gets wings it is very near dying."

"Don't make so many threats, Francis. Gansendonck has said he'll have you put in prison."

"Pshaw! I fear the blusterer as little as if he were only painted on the wall."

"But can't you make Karel understand that he should leave her to go with those for whom she's fit?"

"There's nothing that can cure him. The more people make a laughing-stock of the St. Sebastian, the worse he is. The people down there can make him believe anything. He has lost his senses. He has lost all his spirit too. When people talk about this affair, the tears come into his eyes, he turns on his heel, and good-bye to his friends."

"But can't Jack make Gansendonck understand that when a crow tries to fly with storks, it soon falls into the sea, and is drowned?"

"Gansendonck and his servant use the same comb. Two wet sacks won't dry one another."

"Be quiet, Francis, here he is ; I believe he is coming to the forge."

Karel entered, and greeted his companions with a forced smile. Silently he approached the bench, turned the screw of the vice in a dreamy way, and absently took the tools up one after another, whilst the young peasants looked at him with curiosity and compassion.

Assuredly, they thought, constant sadness must be consuming Karel. In so short a time he is so changed. His face is wan ; his dull eyes wander about, or else are fixed on insignificant objects. His cheeks are hollow and thin. His whole appearance betrays depression and neglect. His clothes are not clean as formerly. His hair falls in disorder about his neck,

"Well, Karel," exclaimed Francis, "here you

come again, like a ghost, without speaking. Come, come, get rid of these miserable thoughts, and remember that you are worth more than those who are grieving you. Turn over a new leaf, and have something to drink. All your sadness won't give Gansendonck sense. And as to his charming daughter, you'll never make her anything else than a"

A shudder and a piercing look from Karel arrested the word on the blacksmith's lips.

"Yes," he resumed. "I know I must not meddle with that. You are like sick people who won't have the doctor, or else throw his physics out of window; but it is of little consequence, these foolish fancies are lasting too long. Do you know what Gansendonck says? He says that Mademoiselle Lisa is going to marry Van Bruinkasteel—to marry him according to the law and the church."

"I would rather he marry her than I," said another. "He will do well with a peasant girl who has wandered from the right way."

Karel struck the vice with his clenched fist,

cast at the speaker a look full of bitterness and anger, and said in a choking voice,—

“Lisa? Lisa is innocent and pure! You are speaking wickedly and unjustly.”

After these few words he resumed his walk, and with slow steps sauntered away from the forge, without heeding what his friend Francis was calling out after him.

He crossed the road, and took a path which led to the country. On the way he talked to himself from time to time, stopping now and then to stamp; then resuming his walk with a quicker step, and going still farther away, when, at the corner of a small pine wood, he suddenly heard his own name. Looking round, he saw Gansendonck's servant seated on a woody slope, a bottle in one hand, a piece of meat in the other, and a gun by his side.

“Oh, Jack!” exclaimed the young man, gladly, “what are you doing here?”

“This is another whim of my master's,” said the servant. “As soon as he can dispense with me, I must set off, and go and play forester.

I am watching here lest the trees should fly away."

"Walk a little way with me," said Karel, with an accent of entreaty.

"I have just finished my meal," said the man, rising. "Look, Karel, at this fine gun. It's so rusty that even a horse couldn't cock it; and the barrel has been loaded for twenty years and three months. Like master like gun."

"Come, Jack," said the brewer to the servant, who was walking by his side, "say a comforting word to me. How are things going on down there?"

"So bad, that I don't know what to begin upon, Karel. Things are going wrong. The master, mad with delight, doesn't know what he's doing. He dreams aloud of barons and chateaux, and three times a day he goes to the lawyer."

"Why, what does that mean?" asked Karel, with emotion.

"He says that Lisa is soon going to be married to M. Van Bruinkasteel."

The young man turned pale, and looked at the other with sorrowful surprise.

"Yes," continued Jack ; "but the young Baron knows nothing of it, and does not suspect it."

"And Lisa ?"

"No more does Lisa."

"Oh !" said Karel, breathing as if a rock had just fallen on his chest ; "Jack, you have hurt me so !"

"If I were in your place," replied Jack, "I would look well into it. When we let the weeds grow too high, they smother the finest corn. You never come to the St. Sebastian till after M. Van Bruinkasteel has gone. You sit half the day by Lisa, looking mournful and making insinuations. If Lisa asks you the cause of your sadness, you tell her that you are ill, and she believes you."

"But, Jack, what can I do ? If I touch upon this affair with the least word, she begins to cry. She does not understand me."

"Tears from a woman are cheap, Karel ; I shouldn't pay much attention to them. It is

too late to fill up the well when the calf is drowned."

"What do you mean?" stammered the young man, frightened. "Do you suspect Lisa? Are you afraid that she . . ."

"If I knew that a hair of my head had an evil thought of Lisa, I would tear it out. No, no; Lisa is innocent in this business. She fancies, poor girl, that these compliments and this French language are only good manners; and when in her love for you she receives the Baron coldly, the master interposes, and obliges her to make herself agreeable. M. Van Bruinkasteel ought to be very good, for her father throws Lisa into his arms ten times a week."

"What, into his arms?" exclaimed Karel, in a gloomy voice.

"That's only a way of speaking," continued Jack; "if you don't understand me, so much the better."

"What must I do, what must I do?" exclaimed Karel, stamping in his despair.

"It's not hidden in the dust that you're

making, Karel. If I were you, I should come to the point. Better a pane of glass broken than the house lost."

"What do you mean? For the love of God, speak more plainly!"

"Well, seek a quarrel with M. Victor. If he has to be thrashed, it will bring about a change; and generally with a change, that which is worth nothing improves."

"If he would only give me a pretext!" exclaimed Karel; "but what he says and does is so cleverly calculated, that there is enough to make one burst with anger, without being able to revenge oneself."

"Come, come. Who wishes to find has no need to seek very far. Tread on his toes. You know well enough his little foot in velvet slippers. In this way the business will soon be in train."

"Ah, Jack, what would Lisa say? Must I compromise her reputation by an aggression that would be regarded as a proof that I, too, have evil thoughts of her?"

"Poor innocent ! Do you believe that people are not finding fault with her ? There is no evil that is not said of her every day. The whole affair is discussed, and each adds his little word."

"Oh, heaven ! she is innocent, and she is judged as if she was guilty."

"Karel, you have no spirit. You see the mischief growing every day, and you bow your head like an impotent child. You see that everything concurs to drive that innocent girl to perdition — Victor's flattering language, her father's mad pride, and her own natural inclination for everything connected with a town life. No one can do anything to save her, no one but you — the guardian angel who sleeps whilst the demon is seeking to lead that dear heart astray ! Thanks to your timid and lazy patience, you leave Lisa alone in the face of the danger which threatens her. If, unhappily, she were to yield, whose fault would it be ? Come, help. God will help you ; be courageous, cut the knot, show yourself a man ! Does not the

proverb say, if the shepherd leave the sheepfold, the wolf will tear the sheep ?”

Karel was silent for a moment, and then said, sighing, “Alas ! alas ! I am afraid of everything. I know that at Lisa’s first look, the last spark of courage in me would be extinguished. My heart is weary, Jack ; I must submit to my wretched lot.”

“Defend her, at least, from the Baron’s rude jokes.”

“Defend her from his jokes ?”

“Do you know what M. Van Bruinkasteel said the day before yesterday, joking with M. Adolphe’s gamekeeper ?”

He drew nearer to Karel, and whispered some words to him.

Karel looked down, and remained still for some moments without speaking. At last he asked, trembling with passion,—

“Jack, is M. Van Bruinkasteel at the inn now ?”

“Yes, yes but,” exclaimed the servant, “you are not going there, Karel ? If I fight

with you, I will prevent you, whilst I have a breath left. I don't understand you : sometimes you are too wise, sometimes too foolish, never as you ought to be. You would go and make fine work at the St. Sebastian. You look like a mad bull !”

Without paying any attention to these words, Karel turned round, and set out rapidly in the direction of the inn. Jack dropped his gun and hurried on after the young man. He put his hand on his arm, and held him by force.

“Let me go,” said Karel, whilst Jack looked at him with an ambiguous smile. “I wish to go, and you know very well that you can't prevent me. Why force me to hurt you ?”

These words, spoken calmly, surprised the servant ; still he did not loosen his hold, and said,—

“Promise me to keep to words, and not to have recourse to blows.”

“I won't hurt any one,” answered the young brewer.

“What are you going to do, then ?”

"Follow your advice. Demand a reason for his behaviour, and say plainly what is in my heart. But fear nothing, Jack; I have a mother."

"Ah! has your good sense returned? You would remonstrate with him? You are not pretending? Is that true? Well, come, I will go with you. Be calm and strong, Karel; he who speaks powerfully has half conquered. Make a little noise, show your teeth, and once for all tell the master the truth. A little spirit won't put him in a passion. Heaven knows, if you attack him well, whether he himself won't be for entreating the Baron to keep away from his house for the future; and then after a storm comes a calm. I fancy already that I see the fiddler at your wedding."

Both walked on slowly. The servant had opened before the young man's eyes a happy future. He encouraged him to show all proper firmness, and advised him this time not to heed Lisa's tears before having fully achieved the end he had in view.

Not far from the inn Jack left his thoughtful companion, alleging that it was too soon for him to return home, and that he had for another whole hour yet to play the forester.

Karel pressed his hand gratefully, and again promised to follow his advice. It seemed to the young man, as soon as he was alone, as if a veil had fallen from his eyes, and that for the first time he saw clearly what was going on, and what he had to do. He intended to demand of Gansendonck a reason for his conduct, and, whether it pleased him or not, to make him feel how far his folly was imperilling, not only Lisa's good name, but her honour itself. The young man's countenance, when he arrived at the inn, testified calm and dispassionate resolution. This state of mind changed suddenly at the back door.

Inside the room might be heard the Baron's voice. He was singing a French song, the air and rhythm of which breathed love and coquetry.

Karel paused, trembling, and listened with eager attention. Lisa's voice mingled timidly

with that of the Baron. She too, was singing the foolish words,

“Bravo, bravo!” exclaimed the innkeeper, clapping his hands as the voices ceased. “It is beautiful.”

A bitter sigh escaped from the young man, and he entered the inn.

At his appearance in the room each rose, frightened or surprised. Lisa gave a startled scream, and held out her hands entreatingly to Karel; the Baron looked at him, proudly, and questioning the innkeeper, stamped impatiently, and grumbled to himself of his wrongs.

One moment Karel stood as if stunned, his hand leaning on a chair; he trembled to such an extent that his legs threatened to break down under the weight of his body, his face was as white as a sheet; in fact, his appearance must have been alarming, for the Baron, brave as he was, turned pale too, and stepped back to get out of the angry young fellow's reach. Gansendonck still appeared only inclined to laugh at Karel, and looked at him with a disdainful smile.

Suddenly the young man darted at the Baron a look burning with hatred and revenge. The Baron exclaimed in an arrogant tone,—

“Come, what does this child’s play mean? Do you know whom you have to deal with? I request that you will not look at me so insolently.”

Karel uttered a smothered cry, he clenched his fist on the back of the chair, and no doubt was going to hurl it at the Baron’s head, but he had not had time to move when Lisa started towards him, and twined her arms round his neck, weeping. Her face was so supplicating, so loving; she called him by such sweet names that, overcome and exhausted, he sank down on the chair, and said with a deep sigh,—

“Oh, thank you, thank you, you have saved me; without you it would have been all over.”

The girl pressed his hands, and continued to calm and comfort him with affectionate words. She saw plainly, by the violent emotion which still agitated him, that the fire of his wrath was not yet extinct, and was endeavouring to ascertain from him the cause of his conduct.

In the meantime the Baron went to the door, and was preparing to leave the inn; but Gansendonck called to him.

"Why, my lord, are you afraid of a mad peasant?"

"I am not afraid of a mad peasant," answered the Baron, opening the door, "but it does not suit me to take him by the collar."

At these insulting words Karel tore himself from Lisa's arms, and ran to the door to meet the Baron outside, but Gansendonck stopped him, and exclaimed, carried away by his passion,—

"Hulloa, scoundrel! this has lasted long enough. What! You come here to turn gentlemen out of my house, and to play the part of master. To strike the Baron Van Bruinkasteel with a chair! I don't know what prevents me giving you in charge. Come, I have some things to say to you, which my daughter had better not hear, so this shall be ended with one blow, or I will show you who is master here."

A bitter smile passed over Karel's face. He followed Gansendonck into another room; the

latter shut the door, and silently, with a threatening look, placed himself before the young brewer, who was evidently trying to repress his emotion, and to regain the calmness necessary for his purpose in this desired interview.

"Look as ugly as you like," said the innkeeper, "I am really amused at your whims. You are going to tell me, and at once, who gives you the right to come into my house, and behave insolently to my friends. Perhaps you think you have bought my daughter?"

"Don't irritate me, for the love of God," said Karel, in a supplicating tone; "let me recover myself a little. I will answer you, and if you won't understand me, I will go away and never again put my foot across your threshold."

"Come, I am curious to hear you. I know what tune you are going to sing to me, but it won't succeed. You are knocking at a deaf man's door."

At this jest Karel's passion again rose. He said, in a hurried voice and with angry gestures,—

"My father assisted you, saved you from

ruin. You promised on his death-bed that Lisa should be my wife ; you have encouraged our love”

“Times have changed, and men, too”

“Now that you have inherited a little of that dirt which is called money, now you wish not only to break your word like an ungrateful man, your solemn word, but more, you sully the honour of my *fiancée*. You sell her modesty for the vain hope of an impossible elevation, and you cause her honour to be dragged in the gutter”

“Oh, oh ! what strain is this ? Who do you think you are speaking to ?”

“And I ; you are ruining me, you are killing me with grief and despair : not because you deprive me of Lisa, no, that you cannot do, she loves me. But can there be a greater martyrdom than to see one’s love led astray under one’s very eyes ? one’s betrothed, to see her polluted because cities nourish wicked and immoral men ? to lead her to the altar, when the purity of her mind shall have been defiled ?”

"Have you learnt this incomprehensible jargon by heart? It is none the clearer for that. I am master, and what I am doing is well done. Perhaps you believe you have more sense than Gansendonck?"

"How blind you are! You force your daughter to listen to the Baron's poisonous words. Each flattery is a stain for her pure mind. You hurry her to her ruin, and if she fall Alas! her own father will have hollowed out the abyss in which his child's honour will be engulfed. What do you hope? That she will marry the Baron Van 'Bruinkasteel! Ah! ah! that cannot be. If there were not his father and his family to prevent it, he himself would reject a wife, already dishonoured in his eyes by the way in which you have undisguisedly sought to attract him."

"Go on," exclaimed Gansendonck, with a mocking laugh. "I did not know your song had so many notes. She will not marry the Baron? You shall come to the wedding if you will behave well. Put love out of your head, Karel,

that's the best thing you can do, otherwise you may get into mischief. In the meantime, my friend, don't come to this house any more, for you must understand that henceforth the Baron will, so to speak, be here all day, and you would be in his way. He is not a man to frequent much the society of peasants."

"The sight of my bitter grief does not affect you, then? He will still come flattering her—deceiving her—with his false words, singing his abominable songs, filling my Lisa's heart with a poison which must kill every sentiment of chastity and honour."

"With poison! What does that mean? Because you are unable to do as much? That's how peasants always speak of city gentlemen. They burst with jealousy when they see any one who understands good manners and gentility. Subdue your feelings, young man. Whatever you say it will do no good. The Baron will continue to come as he has done, and Lisa will become a great lady. You may break your own head, but that will matter no more than a fly in the

boiler at your brewery. I have the right to do in my own house, and with my daughter, what I please, and no one has any business to interfere—you least of all."

"The right!" exclaimed Karel, with a bitter laugh, "the right to sacrifice the honour of your child; to give her up, innocent and pure as she is, a prey to every one's calumnies; to make her disgraced and detested by all, as the despicable plaything of a young, effeminate fop? No, no; you have *not* the right! Lisa belongs to me! If her father wishes to cast her into the mire of ignominy, I will triumphantly tear her from it. I had forgotten my duty, but it is over now. Your Baron shall keep aloof—Lisa shall be saved in spite of you. No, I have no consideration for your fatal ambition!"

"Is that all you have to say?" asked Gansendonck, with the greatest indifference. "Then I shall tell you at once that I forbid you the entry to my house; and if you dare to come here again, I will have you put out by the police and my servants."

"An inn is open to everybody."


"In my house I shall not be without rooms where the Baron can chat with my daughter."

The young man, cast down and discouraged, sank into a chair and hung his head, without answering a word.

"Come, go," said the innkeeper; "you will soon be cured of your amorous defeat. Return home, and in future keep away from the St. Sebastian, without troubling yourself further about Lisa. On this condition we will continue good friends. At a distance, I will forget your pride and your foolish fancies. Wisdom, though late, is still wisdom. Well, are you going?"

Karel rose; his face had undergone a complete transformation: the tension of the muscles had disappeared, the feverish burst of energy had exhausted him, the impotency of his words had taken away all his courage. A suppliant, with clasped hands and tearful eyes, he approached Gansendonck.

"Oh, Gansendonck, have pity on me! I shall die By my father's memory, I implore you



to open your eyes ! Give me your daughter in marriage, before her name is altogether dishonoured. I will make her happy ! I will love her—I will care for her, and work for her like a slave ! I will respect you, obey you, love you like a son, and serve you like a servant ! ”

The sight of Karel thus humiliated before him, inspired the man with some pity, and he answered,—

“Karel, I don’t mean to say that you are not a good fellow, and that my Lisa would not have in you a good husband.”

“Oh, Gansendonck, for the love of God,” entreated the young man, casting on him a look bright with hope, “have pity on me ! Give me Lisa for my wife ! I will carry out your smallest wishes with the submission of a child. I will sell the brewery, I will live in a chateau, I will abandon my position as a peasant, I will entirely change my life.”

“It cannot be, my dear Karel, it is too late.”

“If you knew that it would certainly kill me ? ”

"That would, indeed, grieve me, but I cannot oblige you to live."

"Oh, Gansendonck!" exclaimed the young man, raising his hands, and falling on his knees, "let me hope! Do not kill me!"

The innkeeper raised him, and replied,—

"You are going mad, Karel; I can do nothing. Remember how far things have gone already. To-morrow we are going to dine at the Baron's country house. He gives a *fête* in honour of Lisa."

"She! She, my Lisa, at the Baron's house! Oh, you will sacrifice her honour for ever! There is not a single woman in the place."

"She is going to make acquaintance with the residence of her future husband."

"Then it is hopeless. For her, dishonour—for me, the grave!" exclaimed the young brewer, with horror; sobs choking his voice, he put his hands before his eyes, and the tears poured over his cheeks.

"I pity you, Karel," said Gansendonck, indifferently. "Lisa will be a great lady. It is decreed, and it will be" He took the dis-

console Karel by the shoulders and pushed him gently towards the door, saying, "Come, this has lasted long enough ; and, besides, it can be of no use. Go home and not one word more to Lisa, do you hear?"

Karel allowed himself to be pushed on, docile and silent. His head hung down, tears poured from his eyes on to the ground ; entering the room where Lisa was, he cast at her, as for a last farewell, a despairing glance

The young girl, who had for so long been listening with intense anxiety to the confused sounds in the room from which she was excluded, was standing trembling, waiting for the door to open.

And thus her lover appeared, silent, weeping like an innocent victim marching to death ! A heartrending shriek broke from her bosom, she sprang towards the young man, and hung on his neck sobbing, and trying, in her anguish, to drag him away from the door. Karel looked at her so sadly and lovingly that it wrung from Lisa another cry of distress.

Gansendonck, with threatening words, unfastened his daughter's arms from Karel's neck, pushed the young man out of the inn, and shut the door behind him.

VI.

FINE FEATHERS MAKE FINE BIRDS.

GANSENDONCK was running like a madman up and down his room. He had put the glass on the ground that he might be able to see his legs, and walked backwards and forwards with all manner of admiring exclamations. He was in his shirt-sleeves, and had on quite new trousers with straps. On a chair near the wall were displayed a pair of yellow gloves, a white waistcoat, and a lace frill.

His servant was standing in the middle of the room, with a white cravat folded over his arm. He looked patiently at his master; only, from time to time, an almost imperceptible smile of pity or contempt appeared on his face.

“Well, Jack,” said his master, with expansive delight, “what do you say? Doesn’t it look well?”

"I am not a judge, sir," answered Jack, crossly.

"You can still see whether it suits me well or ill?"

"I like you better without those little straps to your trousers, sir. Your legs are as stiff as broomsticks."

Gansendonck, astounded at this audacious remark, looked furiously at his servant, and exclaimed,—

"What does that mean? You, too, are beginning to set up your back. Do you think that I pay and feed you to say unpleasant things to me? Come, speak, does it suit me? Yes or no?"

"Yes, sir."

"What—yes, sir?" vociferated Gansendonck, stamping. "Does it suit me? Yes or no, I ask you."

"It could not become you better, sir."

"Oh, you're obstinate. Would you like to have your wages, and get another place? Is not your life good enough here? Perhaps you

want better bread than wheaten bread. This is the way with those who have fallen into clover; but it is very true, give the ass oats, he will run to thistles."

Jack, with real or pretended uneasiness, said in a beseeching tone,—

"Oh, master, I have such a stomach ache, I don't know what I am saying. You must forgive me. Your trousers fit you as well as if they were painted on your legs."

"Oh, you have the stomach ache," said Gansendonck, kindly. "Open the little cupboard down stairs, and drink a glass of bitters. That which is bitter to the taste is good for the stomach."

"Yes, sir, you are too kind," answered Jack, walking towards the cupboard.

"Give me my cravat, and carefully, so as not to tumble it."

Whilst proceeding with his dressing, he spoke dreamily.

"Oh, Jack, how the country people will stand open-mouthed at seeing me pass with a white

waistcoat, a lace frill, and yellow gloves. Heaven only knows whether they have ever seen anything like it in their lives before. I asked M. Van Bruinkasteel, carefully, how gentlemen who are accustomed to society dress when they go out to dinner; and in four days all this has been made for me in town. With money one may accomplish more than wonders—one may work miracles. And Lisa, she will make their eyes start out of the sockets, with the six flounces of her silk dress.”

“Six flounces, sir? The lady of the chateau herself only wears five, and those only on Sunday.”

“If Lisa would act according to my taste, she would wear ten. When people are wealthy, they might as well show it; and he who can pay may buy. You will see her pass through the country people like a real lady, Jack, in a satin bonnet, with flowers like those that are grown at the chateau in winter.”

“Camellias, sir?”

“Yes, camellias. Just think, Jack, they put

wheatears and buckwheat flowers in Lisa's bonnet ; but I soon made them change such a peasant's style of ornament. Give me my waistcoat, but without touching it with your hands."

"That is an art I have not yet learnt, sir."

"Fool ! I mean, take it with the towel."

"Yes, sir."

"Tell me, Jack, can you fancy me seated at table at the chateau ? Lisa between me and the Baron ? Can you hear us paying compliments, and saying fine things ? Can you see us drinking all kinds of strange wines, and eating game prepared with sauces of which the devil himself could not remember the names ? and that on gilt plates, and with silver spoons."

"Yes, sir ; be quiet, please, you make my mouth water."

"It may well, Jack ; but I don't wish to be happy by myself. There is still half of yesterday's hare left, you can eat it, and have a couple of pints of barley beer with it."

"You are too good, sir."

"And then come in the afternoon, and see if I have any orders to give you."

"Yes, sir."

"But tell me, Jack, would Lisa be dressed by this time?"

"I don't know, sir. Just now, when I went to get some fresh rain water, she was still seated near the table."

"And what dress had she on?"

"Her ordinary Sunday dress, I believe, sir."

"Has she told you that yesterday I turned the brewer out of the house?"

"I saw that she was very much out of spirits, sir; but I don't inquire about things which do not concern me—he is a fool who burns himself with another man's saucepan."

"You're right, Jack; but I can speak to you about it if I like. Would you believe it, she is still so taken up with that wretched Karel, that she refused to go and dine with the Baron, because she saw him weeping when he went away? For the whole evening I had to quarrel

with my own daughter in order to change her determination."

"And did she say at last she would go with you, sir?"

"What! She has nothing to say. I am master."

"That's quite certain, sir."

"Did she not even have the audacity to tell me, that she would not marry the Baron?"

"Indeed?"

"Yes, and that she will remain single all her life, unless she has that scoundrel, Karel, for a husband. She would look beautiful in that dirty brewery, seated at a spinning-wheel, watching a saucepan. And when she wished to go into town, she could climb up on to the brewer's dray, could she not?"

"Yes, sir."

"Come, give me my gloves, I am ready. Let us see what Lisa is doing; perhaps she's going to treat us to some new caprice. Yesterday evening she would not hear reason about the six flounces of her new dress. Whether she

will or no, she shall dress herself as I consider proper."

Lisa was seated in the front room near the window. Deep sadness was imprinted on her countenance. She was holding a needle in one hand, and in the other a piece of embroidery; but her thoughts were far away, for she sat still without working.

"What does this mean?" exclaimed Gansendonck, angrily. "I am dressed from head to foot, and you are still there, as if nothing was going on."

"I am ready, father," answered Lisa, with patient resignation.

"Father, father; you still wish, then, to make me jump out of my skin."

"I am ready, papa," repeated the young girl.

"Get up, then," said Gansendonck, sternly.

"What dress have you on?"

"My Sunday dress, papa."

"Quick—go, Lisa, and put on your new dress, and your bonnet with the flowers."

Lisa bent her head and answered nothing.

"Better and better," vociferated Gansendonck.
"Will you speak, yes or no?"

"Oh, papa," exclaimed Lisa, in a supplicating tone. "Do not compel me. The dress and hat are not suitable for my station. I should not dare to wear them through the village. You wish me to go with you to the chateau. Well, I have begged you on my knees to leave me at home. However, I will go; but for the love of heaven, let me go in my ordinary Sunday clothes."

"In a cap, with one single flounce to your dress," said Gansendonck, sarcastically. "You would be a fine figure like that at a table covered with gilt dishes and silver spoons! Come, come, not so many words. Put on your new dress, and your bonnet, I wish it."

"You can do what you like, papa," said Lisa, sighing, and hanging her head sadly. "You may scold me, punish me, I shall not put on the new dress—I shall not wear the bonnet. . . ."

From the chimney corner James nodded his head to encourage the girl in her resistance.

The innkeeper turned round towards his servant, and asked him in an angry tone—

“Well, what do you say to a girl who dares speak thus to her father?”

“She may be right, sir.”

“What do you say? You too? Do both of you intend to kill me with passion? I’ll teach you, you ungrateful fellow! . . . to-morrow you shall go from here.”

“But, my dear master, you don’t understand,” said Jack, with feigned terror, “I mean that Lisa would, indeed, be right, if she were not wrong.”

“Oh, speak a little more clearly another time, then.”

“Yes, sir.”

“And you, Lisa, be quick. Whether you like it or no, you shall obey me, if I have to put on your dress by force.”

The young girl melted into tears. This circumstance, no doubt, increased her father’s displeasure, for he began grumbling to himself, and knocking the chairs against one another.

“Better still,” he exclaimed, “cry for an hour or two, Lisa, you’ll look pretty afterwards, with a pair of red eyes like a white rabbit. I won’t have you cry,—that’s your game, that we may be obliged to stay at home.”

The girl continued weeping, without saying a word.

“Come,” said her father, impatiently, “since it can’t be helped, dress yourself as you will, but stop crying ; come, Lisa, be quick.”

Lisa rose and, without speaking, mounted the stairs, to go and prepare for her visit to the chateau.

Scarcely had she disappeared when M. Van Bruinkasteel entered the inn, saying to the landlord :—

“What has kept you so long, M. Gansendonck ? I was afraid something had happened. We have been expecting you, more than an hour already.”

“It is Lisa’s fault,” answered Gansendonck. “I had a beautiful new dress made for her, and a satin bonnet, but I don’t know what she has

got into her head, she won't put on her new clothes."

"She is right, M. Gansendonck, she certainly is always charming."

"Still, fine clothes spoil no one, M. Victor."

Lisa came down and greeted the Baron with frigid politeness. Her eyes attested her sadness, and it was easy to see that she had been weeping. She wore her ordinary silk dress with a single flounce, and a lace cap like those worn in the town, and called *mob caps*.

She purposely put her arm in her father's, and tried to draw him to the door, but he disengaged himself, and walked away from her, as if to invite the Baron to be his daughter's cavalier.

M. Victor did not appear to perceive it, perhaps he did not think it suitable for Lisa and himself to walk through the village arm in arm.

After some compliments, as to who should go out first, they left the inn. Gansendonck made a virtue of necessity, and walked with his daughter.

Going along he said to her bitterly :—

“Do you see, you obstinate girl? If you had on your fine dress, and your bonnet with the flowers, the Baron might have given you his arm. Now he won’t ; your appearance is too common, that’s how it is.”

They were obliged to pass the brewery. There, behind the stable wall, the girl saw the wretched Karel, who stood, his arms crossed on his chest, his head hanging, looking at her with a saddened countenance, without showing anger or surprise, only in his languid countenance might be read depression, weariness, and gloomy despair.

Lisa uttered a cry of pain, and before her father could prevent her, tore her arm from his, and darted towards Karel ; she seized both his hands in her trembling ones with a thousand confused expressions of love and tenderness.

Gansendonck approached the two lovers, darted a furious look at the brewer, and forced his daughter to leave the young man.

Lisa, silent, and her mind filled with bitter thoughts, resumed her walk towards M. Van Bruinkasteel’s country seat.

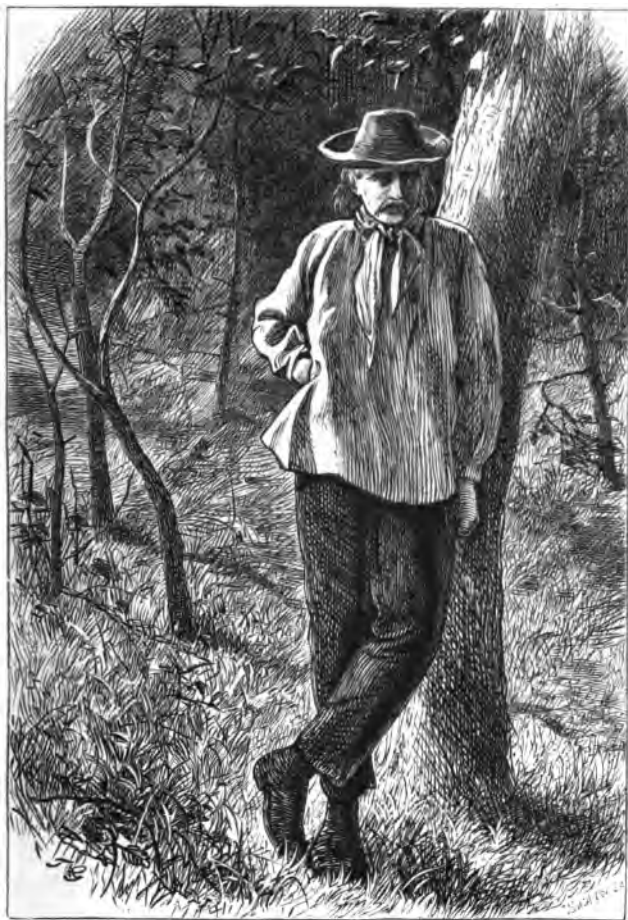
VII.

Now, like a bull with raving madness torn,
He rushes on the victim of his wrath,
And felling him, with words of bitter scorn,
Deals blow on blow, and blood comes spirting forth.

ANON.

TOWARDS evening Karel was in a high cop-pice, his back leaning against a birch tree. Before him, on the other side of the ditch, rose M. Van Bruinkasteel's shooting-box.

The young man had already been some time in this solitary place, he himself not knowing how or why he had come. Whilst, with his head full of melancholy reveries, he was absently wandering through several fields, his heart led him this way, to fill him with rancour more bitter still. There he was, like an inanimate statue, his gaze fixed obstinately on the Baron's dwelling, and only from time to time giving



“Towards evening Karel was in a high coppice, his back leaning against a birch tree.”

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signs of life by a sad smile or convulsive shudder. His mind was tortured. In his troubled imagination, he saw through the walls behind which Lisa was; he saw her seated by the Baron's side; he heard declarations of love, polite and flattering words; he surprised languid glances, and saw Gansendonck trying to silence his daughter's modesty, and then . . . then poor weak Lisa, not knowing what to do, allowed the Baron to take her hand, and fix on her his admiring gaze.

Poor Karel! he wounded his own heart in a thousand ways, and forced his overwrought imagination to probe the wound, that he might drink the cup of sorrow to the dregs.

After being some time lost in these mournful and gloomy reveries, he fell into a kind of mental sleep. His nerves were relaxed, his countenance expressed nothing but indifference and exhaustion; his head sank on his bosom, and his half-closed eyes were fixed on the ground. Suddenly the sounds of some distant strains, to which were united the tones of a

man's voice, weakened by distance, fell on his ear.

Indistinct as was this song, it acted powerfully on the young man's mind. Trembling in all his limbs, the thirst for vengeance depicted on his features, he started as if a serpent had stung him. A bright light shone in his eyes; his parted lips showed his teeth; so furiously did he clench his fists, that his fingers cracked. He knew the hateful song; that song which, like an infernal voice, had taught Lisa's ear the language of coarseness and sensuality. Those odious words had burnt into his very heart when he had heard Lisa singing them with the Baron.

In his despair the young man broke the twigs from the oaks, and hoarse exclamations burst from him.

The strain rose, the sounds became more distinct; the words *I love you* reached the coppice, and the Baron threw into them so much expression, that it was impossible not to think that he addressed them directly to Lisa.

Beside himself, not knowing what he was

going to do, Karel sprang into the ditch, climbed up the other bank, and disappeared under the thick foliage of a group of filbert trees, which extended to the border of a wide path. Still hiding, he passed like a wild beast through the grove, until he drew near a thick arch of foliage. The branches of two hedges of witch-elms, planted at a short distance from one another, had been carefully bent, and formed by their union a verdant arch. Although the last rays of the sun still lighted one side of this path, and sprinkled the transparent leaves with luminous specks, separating them from the deeper green of the lower part, it was, nevertheless, very dark.

The young man crossed the path and drew near the house on the drawing-room side, where the Baron and his companions were sitting.

Three or four steps from one window of the room rose a group of seringas, whose flowers must certainly in the spring have filled the house with sweet perfume. Karel crouched down in this retreat, whence his gaze penetrated directly and without any obstacle into the room.

Oh ! how his heart beat, how the blood rushed to his head ! He could see all, he could hear all, for wine and pleasure had elevated their voices.

It seemed to him that they were trying to make Lisa do something against her will. The Baron, with gentle force, drew her by the hand to the piano. Her father pushed her less respectfully, and exclaimed, half angrily,—

“Lisa, Lisa, you are again going to put me into a passion with your obstinacy ! Are you beginning as you did this morning ? These gentlemen beg you so kindly to sing the little song again, and you are rude enough to refuse ! You must not hide your voice, my child, but rather let it be heard.”

The Baron entreated afresh, Gansendonck commanded angrily. Lisa obeyed, and began to sing with the Baron. The piano accompanied them.

The foliage of the seringas shook, as if from a puff of wind

Gansendonck was almost beside himself with pride ; his face was radiant and purple with

contentment. He constantly rubbed his hands and spoke so freely, so boldly, and so often, that any one not knowing him would never have doubted his being the owner of the chateau. Standing near the piano, he moved his head and stamped with his heavy foot on the waxed floor, out of time with the music, saying every now and then to his daughter,—

“Louder! Quicker! That’s well! Bravo!”

He had no idea that Adolphe and his friend, and even Victor himself, were making him the object of their jokes; on the contrary, he regarded the mocking laugh of the young men as a mark of approbation and friendship.

The song was scarcely finished when Adolphe, who was seated at the piano, ran his fingers over the keys, and began a waltz, so inspiring, so enticing in its time and melody, that the innkeeper himself felt inclined to dance, and actually stood on the points of his toes, as if he were going to bound round the drawing-room.

“Dance, dance,” exclaimed he, “our Lisa dances to such perfection, that it’s quite worth

while to put everything out of the way to see her move her feet. Come Lisa, show us what you learnt at school."

Lisa, who was already much annoyed at having been obliged to sing, tried to move away from the piano, in order to elude her father's fresh command, but he brought her back to the middle of the room, and made a sign of encouragement to the Baron.

The latter, inclined for amusement and fun, passed his arm round the girl's waist, and dragged her, so that in spite of herself she was obliged to take five or six steps.

A low mournful cry rose from the seringa grove, but the party within was far too much occupied to notice it.

As Lisa positively refused to dance and only allowed herself to be dragged round ; with a bad grace M. Van Bruinkasteel was obliged to give it up. He apologised politely to the abashed girl, and did not appear struck either by her evident sadness, or by her refusal. The young fellow was amusing himself ; in reality he only

saw in Lisa a charming and naïve young girl, who was helping him to spend his time agreeably. If he had experienced any deeper feeling for her, her marked coldness would certainly have displeased or saddened him, but he did not appear to pay the slightest attention to it. He bowed, gallantly offered his arm to Lisa, who this time dared not refuse it, and said to the others :—

“Let us take a walk in the garden, until the lamps are lighted. Don’t complain, gentlemen, if I am Mademoiselle Lisa’s cavalier.”

All descended the broad stone staircase, and walked towards the shadiest part of the garden, where there were several different pathways ; the Baron led Lisa towards a dahlia bed, Adolphe and his companion strolled off in another direction. The girl perceived with surprise, and not without a certain anxiety, that her father also was leaving her ; she cast at him an imploring glance, and wanted to leave the Baron, but Gansendonck, with feigned anger, ordered her to follow her conductor, and immediately ran towards Adolphe laughing, as if he had just

done a clever thing. Lisa trembled, her innate sense of what was proper cried loudly that she was not right to wander thus alone arm-in-arm with the Baron, but her companion said nothing improper, and down there, at the end of the path, she would be certain, she thought, to find her father. Besides, would it not have been rude to leave the Baron, and run away like a child ?

Preoccupied with these thoughts, she regretfully followed the young man, whom she only answered with few and absent words. A moment after they all disappeared in the winding paths of the garden, and under the shade of the thick masses of verdure.

The unhappy Karel, his head burning with fever, suffered a martyrdom. Twenty times already the ardent desire for vengeance, which was smouldering in his bosom, had incited him to burst from the seringa grove, and crush the Baron, but each time his mother's imploring face presented itself before his eyes, and he was tossed about between the thirst for vengeance, and the calmer counsels of filial love.

Suddenly, the Baron's voice sounded again, a few steps from him. He saw Lisa advancing, silent and sorrowful, on the gentleman's arm ; they followed the path which ran along by the seringas, and led farther on to the walk shaded by the witch-elms.

Two steps from the place where Karel, holding his breath, and a prey to anxious expectation, was watching their smallest movement. Lisa saw the entrance to the shady path. She begged the Baron to rejoin her father, and when the young man, who was the worse for wine, only held her arm more closely, and laughed at her entreaties, she trembled and turned pale. The Baron did not or pretended not to see this ; however it was, he tried, still joking, to make her walk on, and succeeded for a few steps. . . .

"Father ! father !" cried Lisa, in a frightened voice.

She would have called again, but before she had time to say another word two powerful hands rested on the Baron's shoulders, and a single blow felled him to the ground.

The Baron rose, furious, tore up the prop of a dahlia, and rushed towards Karel, who awaited him with a laugh. M. Van Bruinkasteel gave the young man such a blow on the head that the blood flowed over his cheeks. This was the signal for a furious struggle. Karel seized his antagonist by the middle of his body, raised him in the air, and hurled him like a stone on to the ground. Notwithstanding, the Baron rose again, and strove with the powerful young man, until the latter once more threw him down, and kneeling on his adversary's chest, struck him repeated and furious blows in the face.

Lisa, shrieking with terror, had watched the struggle until she saw the blood flow, and then she fled, but only for a few steps before she fell senseless on the turf.

However, her cries had been heard by the other three, and even by the servants, and had filled them with alarm. They ran from different sides, and tore Karel from the Baron's prostrate form. Five or six of the servants held him, by Adolphe's orders, whilst he, like a fury, glared

at his enemy, whom he had just reduced to such a pitiable condition.

Gansendonck had run, horror-struck, to his daughter, with the terrible notion that his child was killed.

Adolphe and his friend helped Victor to rise. His face and body were cruelly bruised. However, his anger lighted up again, and he recovered his strength when he saw the brewer standing before him.

"Wretch!" he exclaimed; "I would have you whipped to death by my servants, but the scaffold shall avenge me upon you, cowardly assassin! Let him be shut up in the cellar, and you, Stephen, run and fetch the police."

In order to execute their master's order the servants tried to drag Karel away, but he only then perceiving what they intended to do with him, released his arms by a vigorous effort, threw the man who was before him into the midst of the seringas, sprang over the ditch, and before any one could follow him, disappeared from all eyes into the pine wood.

VIII.

PRIDE THAT DINES ON VANITY SUPS ON CONTEMPT.

THE next morning Lisa was seated in a private room at the St. Sebastian, behind the muslin window-curtain. The extreme pallor of her face and the redness of her eyes betokened that she was worn out with weeping, and the convulsive twitching of her features showed that she was still a prey to some nervous excitement ; her cast down and sorrowful countenance betrayed uneasy agitation, and convulsive shudders from time to time contracted her features. One would think that great terror, that anxious expectation, oppressed her heart, for she often looked tremblingly behind the curtains, and her eye was fixed on the street with evident uneasiness, until some passer-by seemed to be

looking curiously at the house. Then, although she could not have been seen from the outside, she drew back her head quickly. A feeling of shame tinged her cheeks with a vivid blush ; she lowered her eyes as if she shrank from the accusing gaze of the people, and so continued for a length of time perfectly still, but she always ended by looking out again with eager curiosity, and even agony.

What could she be expecting ? She herself knew not, but conscience gnawed at her heart like a worm. Karel's image floated before her eyes, and cried out to her that she was the cause of all the torment that rent his loving heart. In her terrified imagination she heard what the country people were saying of her. For the first time she understood fully that she had lost her reputation, and that Karel himself would henceforth have the right to repulse her. That was why the glances of the passers-by made her tremble and blush. She read in their countenances that they were speaking of the event of yesterday, and that mockery, contempt, and

anger accompanied their words. She had even seen some of the peasants shake a threatening fist at the inn, as if they were swearing solemnly to have vengeance on Gansendonck for the dishonour done to their village.

Whilst Lisa was slowly drinking the bitter cup of shame and remorse, Jack, alone and still also, was seated by the hearth.

He held his pipe in his hand, but he was not smoking ; profound reflections, sad thoughts, seemed to absorb him. His countenance wore an expression quite different from that which was habitual to him. It was a mixture of bitterness, indignation, even of haughtiness. His lips moved as if he spoke, and the flame of passion sparkled at times in his eyes.

Suddenly he heard Gansendonck's voice. A smile of contempt contracted his features ; but it soon disappeared, and left only an expression of bitterness and grief.

As the innkeeper approached the door, the servant heard him grumbling, and scattering invectives against some one who had injured

him ; but Jack could not as yet understand against whom or against what the man was railing. In any case it seemed of little moment to him, for he did not stir, but remained seated under the mantelpiece.

His master abruptly entered, stamping like a madman, and striking the chairs with his stick as if they had offended him.

"That is going too far, positively too far!" exclaimed he. "A man like me! What, in the open street they dare to shake their fists at me; to pursue me with their cries; to hoot at me; to treat me as if I were a scoundrel block-heads! Just think, Jack, must they not be possessed by the devil. Those rascals of peasants came out of the forge, and ran after me screaming. Scandalous! scandalous! If I had not been afraid of dirtying my hands by touching such a rabble, I believe I should have broken the heads of half-a-dozen of them with my stick. But Francis shall pay for all these tricks. I'll teach him to throw mud at the landlord of the St. Sebastian. We'll see how it will

end. If I lose half of my wealth over it, there shall be a terrible expiation. The police shall take it in hand ; and if any one dares to look black at me again I will summon half the village before the magistrates. I have enough money for that, and M. Van Bruinkasteel, who is the friend of the king's procurator, will soon get them put in prison for some months. They will see and know then with whom they have to do, the impudent scoundrels. There must be an end to all this ; and since they have dared to provoke me so insolently, I will be pitiless too, and make them feel what Gansendonck can do. No, it is all over ; no more mercy."

Gansendonck would certainly have continued for a long time yet to pour out his rage in this manner, if breath had not failed him. Exhausted, he dropped on to a chair, and his eyes rested with anger and surprise on his servant, who with the most perfect indifference was looking at the fire, as if he had heard nothing, his countenance only expressive of sadness.

“What are you looking at there, like an idiot that doesn’t know how to count three? Your idle life spoils you, Jack. I don’t know why, but you are becoming as indolent and soft as a pig. It displeases me. I expect my servant to be quick and energetic, and not to remain calm when I am angry.”

Jack looked at his master with a sorrowful smile of pity.

“Oh! you still have a stomach-ache!” exclaimed the latter. “It begins to weary me. Do you imagine that the St. Sebastian is a hospital? I won’t allow you to have the stomach-ache. You have only to eat a little less, greedy glutton that you are. Come, will you speak?”

“I should speak very willingly,” answered Jack, “if I did not know that at the first word you would shut my mouth, to begin another tirade, and sing your eternal litany.”

“What do you mean by that? Say at once that I am a tedious chatterer. Don’t trouble yourself, Jack; they are all falling on the body

of Peter Gansendonck. Why should not you cast a stone at him who feeds you ? ”

“ Don’t you see,” said Jack, smiling sadly, “ I haven’t spoken two words, and there you are astride on your hobby-horse ! I should take good care not to speak an offensive word to you ; but acknowledge with me, sir, that the spider would be very nimble that could spin his web on your mouth.”

“ I am the master. I can talk as long as I please.”

“ Certainly, sir. Allow me, then, to be silent, even if it suffocates me.”

“ You to be silent ? No, I won’t have it. You shall speak. I am curious to see what good can come out of your mouth, out of such a fool’s head as yours.”

“ Still waters run the deepest, sir.”

“ Come, speak ; but not for too long, and above all, don’t forget that I don’t pay my servant to teach me.”

“ There is a proverb, sir, ‘ The sage went to consult the fool, and found the truth.’ ”

"Well, tell me what counsel the fool has for the sage. If you speak reasonably, I will listen a little while."

The servant turned round with his chair towards his master, and said, in a distinct and resolute manner,—

"Master, during the last two months there have been things going on here which even a stupid servant can't see without at times his blood boiling with impatience."

"I think so, indeed ; but that won't last long. The police are not paid to catch flies."

"As to my own concerns, sir, I am idle, I own ; but still my heart is all right. I would do much to save our dear Lisa from evil, if it were in my power ; and I don't forget either, sir, that, notwithstanding your hastiness, you are at the bottom kind to me."

"That's true, Jack," said the man, touched. "I am glad to hear that you are grateful to me ; but what are you coming to with such a grave manner ?"

"Don't make me put the cart before the

horse, sir. I shall soon come to the most important part."

"Be short, then, or I must be gone. You will kill me if you twaddle on like that."

"Well, listen to me only for a minute. Lisa was for a long time engaged to marry Karel, who is a good fellow, although he may have acted foolishly."

"A good fellow!" exclaimed the innkeeper. "What? You call him a good fellow, he who like an assassin attacked and beat the Baron in his own chateau?"

"The best horse trips sometimes."

"Oh! you call that tripping? Oh! he's a good fellow! You shall pay dear for that remark. Your white bread is eaten: you shall leave the house this very day."

"My bundle is ready, sir," answered Jack, coldly; "but before I go you shall hear what is in my mind. You shall hear it, if I have to follow you through the street, through the country, into your bedroom. It is my duty, and the only gratitude I can show you. That you should

send me away does not surprise me ; he who tells the truth is nowhere entertained."

Gansendonck stamped with impatience, but said not a word. His servant's grave and decided manner awed him.

"Our Lisa," continued Jack, "would have been happy with Karel, but you have brought the fox into your poultry yard ; you have attracted to your house a young fop ; you have induced him to fill your daughter's ear with empty compliments, and to speak to her of pretended love, to sing to her things contrary to all modesty"

"That's not true," growled Gansendonck.

"You wished him to speak French to your daughter. Could you understand what he was saying to her, you who don't know a word of it ?"

"And you, rascal, do you understand it, that you speak so confidently ?"

"I understand enough to know that the evil spirit of folly and deceit was at work. What has been the result of your imprudence ? Must

I tell you? Your daughter's honour is sullied—not, indeed, past forgiveness—but sufficiently so in the opinion of people with whom she can never regain her first purity. Karel, the only man who really loved her, and who could have made her happy, is wasting away in his despair; his mother is on a sick bed from grief for her only child; you, sir, you are hated and despised by all. People are saying that you will be the cause of Karel's death, of your daughter's dishonour, and your own misery."

"Yes, when people want to kill a dog, they say he is mad; but they have nothing to do with my affairs," said the innkeeper, angrily. "I do what I please, and it does not concern them; and you, insolent scoundrel, I will teach you, too, to put your nose into what doesn't concern you."

"It is quite the same to me, sir, whether my words please you or not," answered Jack. "They are the last I shall speak in your house."

Notwithstanding his threats, Gansendonck must have been thoroughly attached to his servant, and dreaded his departure; for each

time that the latter coolly announced that he was resolved to quit his master's service, Gansendonck's anger was mollified, and he listened more patiently. Jack resumed :—

“Now, what must be the result? I fear we must say with the proverb, the pitcher that goes often to the water gets broken at last. No; your daughter's natural modesty will save you from the greatest dishonour, but the Baron will weary of Lisa's society, and will seek other amusements. Lisa will be avoided; all who think rightly will shun her. The world will laugh at you, and rejoice at your shameful deception.”

“But, Jack, who can manage so as to please everybody? He who mends the roads is not without critics. I don't understand your folly. Don't you know what the game is? The Baron will marry Lisa. There is no doubt about it. Most certainly it is plain enough; and then the slanderers of the village, and you with them, will open your eyes wide, like a lot of owls in the sun. If I were not sure of this, perhaps

there might be something to talk about ; but even then no one would have a right to meddle. I am master in my own house."

"Indeed ! the Baron going to marry Lisa ? Then all is well, and you can put a fine feather in your cap, sir. But it is not unusual to take the thing desired for the thing done. May I ask you a question, sir ?"

"Well ?"

"Has the Baron spoken to you of this marriage ?"

"That's not necessary."

"Oh ! No doubt, then, you have asked his intentions ?"

"That's not necessary either."

"Has the Baron spoken to Lisa about it ?"

"What childishness are you talking now, Jack ? It's likely he would go and ask Lisa's consent, without knowing if I, who am sole master, consent to the marriage. Things are not done in that way."

"No ; but the Baron laughed at you and your daughter when the Doctor asked at the cemetery.

before at least ten people if he really meant to marry Lisa."

"What do you say? M. Van Bruinkasteel laughed at me?"

"He asked the Doctor whether he thought that a Baron like him could marry the daughter of a village innkeeper; and when he was told that you yourself had already consulted the lawyer as to the settlements, he exclaimed, 'Lisa is a fine girl, but her father is an old fool, who ought to have been at Gheel* long ago!'"

These last words made Gansendonck start as if some one had just trodden on his corn.

"What do you dare to say?" exclaimed he, in a threatening voice. "I ought to be at Gheel! What is come to you? Have you lost your senses? Ah! it is indeed true, a mad dog even bites his master."

"I am repeating to you what a dozen people declare they have heard. You are free to disbelieve it, if you like; what good . . ."

* Gheel is a village to which mad people are sent to be taken care of.

"Yes, yes, finish,—what good are spectacles to an owl that won't see? I don't know why I don't seize you by the shoulders, and pitch you out at the door."

"What good is light to a person who shuts his eyes? The Baron has laughed at your hopes on other occasions"

"No, no, what you are going to say is not true. You believe the calumnies of jealous people who are mad with rage because I have more money than they, and because they know that Lisa will be a grand lady in spite of those who are envious of her."

"When the blind believes that he sees, he sees what he wishes," said Jack, sighing. "If there is no ointment which can cure your wound, I can do nothing more; and I say with the proverb, 'each person makes his soup as he likes to eat it.' Follow your bent and make the marriage to-morrow."

"Inventions of wicked jealousy, and nothing more."

"The Doctor does not envy you, sir; he is a

grave and prudent man, who alone, perhaps of all the village, has continued your friend. He himself persuaded me, whether against your will or not, to put the danger before your eyes."

"But the Doctor is mistaken, Jack; he has been made to believe falsehoods. It cannot be otherwise, I tell you. It would be honourable, indeed, if the Baron did not marry Lisa!"

"Don't count your chickens before they are hatched, sir."

"I am as sure of it, as of my father's name."

"You are not in the saddle yet, and you are beginning to gallop. I tell you that the Baron laughs at you, turns you into ridicule, and treats you like a fool; I tell you that you are blind, that I pity both you and Lisa, and that to-morrow morning I shall go away from here, that I may not see the sad end of this unhappy business. And if you will listen to me, sir, as a farewell I will give you some advice, advice which is worth gold."

"As a farewell! Well, speak; what is this precious advice?"

“Don’t you see, sir, that a man who is too credulous, is easily duped. If I were in your place, I should wish to know to-day how the case stands. I should go to the shooting-box, and boldly ask M. Van Bruinkasteel what are his intentions respecting Lisa. Fine words and compliments should not delude me ; all my remarks should end with this question,—Are you going to be married or not ? I should force him to deal above-board, and to give me once for all a decisive answer. If he refused, as is probable, I should forbid him henceforth to speak a word to Lisa ; I should very quickly replace the old barriers ; I should apologise to Karel ; I should recall him, and hasten his marriage with Lisa. This is the only means left to you for avoiding great sorrow and dishonour.”

“Well, if M. Van Bruinkasteel does not soon come and speak to me himself about his marriage, I shall venture to question him on the subject ; but there’s no hurry.”

“There’s no hurry, sir ! You must know this very day what the Baron means.”

"Well, well," exclaimed Gansendonck, "I'll go this afternoon to the shooting-box. I'll ask the Baron to explain himself clearly; but I know beforehand what he'll answer."

"I wish, indeed, that you may speak the truth, sir; but I very much fear that you may be ill received."

"What! that I may speak the truth!"

"That you may be speaking the truth now, sir."

"The world is upside down," sighed Gansendonck, with gloomy impatience, "the servant teaches the master . . . and I must swallow it. But wait a little; I shall soon be revenged. This afternoon I will go to the Baron's shooting-box, and what will you say, you insolent scoundrel, when I return with the Baron's declaration that he intends to marry Lisa?"

"That you alone have any sense, sir, and that all else, myself included, are great imbeciles. But what shall you say if M. Van Bruinkasteel laughs at you?"

"It cannot be, I tell you."

"Yes, but still if it is?"

"If? if! if heaven were to fall down we should be killed."

"I repeat my question, sir,—If the Baron politely shows you out, laughing at you?"

"Ah! Baron or not, I will show him who I am, and"

A terrible cry of distress, a piercing cry of anguish arrested the word on his lips.

Both started agitated and alarmed, and ran to the room where Lisa was.

The young girl was standing near the window, looking into the street. What she saw must have been very dreadful: her lips were drawn tightly together over her closed teeth; her eyes, wide open, seemed starting from their sockets, and a terrified shudder shook her frame. Scarcely had Gansendonck reached the middle of the room, than there resounded another cry, more heartrending than the first. Lisa raised both her hands, and fell backwards heavily on the floor. Her father threw himself on his knees beside her, but Jack ran to the window and looked



“ Lisa raised both her hands, and fell backwards heavily on the floor.”

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out. He too turned pale, and trembled; the tears flowed from his eyes. What he saw so appalled him that he paid no attention to Gansendonck's calls for help.

In the street, before the very door of the inn, was Karel walking towards the town between two policemen, his hands tied behind his back; an old woman dragged herself after him, wringing her hands, and the hot tears falling all unheeded down her withered cheeks. Francis the blacksmith seemed half mad with rage and grief. Many of the peasants, both male and female, followed with hanging heads and grief-stricken faces. More than one apron wiped away the tear of pity. A stranger would have thought that it was a funeral procession, bearing a beloved friend to the grave.

IX.

PRIDE, LIKE A WILD HORSE, OVERTHROWS ITS RIDER.

AS soon as Gansendonck had finished dinner he started, in accordance with his servant's advice, to go and question the Baron as to his intentions. Not wishing to pass the forge, he went out by the back-door, and chose a path which would lead him through pine-woods and unfrequented fields to M. Van Bruinkasteel's shooting-box.

Gansendonck's countenance expressed no sadness, notwithstanding that since the morning his daughter had been taken ill with a violent nervous fever; on the contrary, a certain expression of satisfaction brightened his face, and from time to time he smiled as openly, as triumphantly, as if he was rejoicing over a victory

gained. From the mobility of his features and the varied expressions which succeeded one another, it was easy to perceive that during his walk he was deluding himself with pleasant dreams and giving himself up complacently to his hopes and illusions. For some time he went on murmuring to himself, and his gestures alone betrayed the pre-occupation of his mind. But gradually the golden visions in which he was indulging engaged him so entirely that he raised his voice more and more, and soon spoke aloud.

“ Ah ! they are leagued together against me, and do they imagine that I shall draw back one step before their stupid clamour ? Gansendonck knows how to show them what he is and what he can do ! Another would say friends are worth more than enemies ; for my part, I say, better be envied than pitied ; and he who numbers too many friends is the world’s plaything. The Baron would not marry Lisa ! And this very day he has sent his servant twice to inquire after her health. When I think about it, it is impossible to doubt. Did he not himself

tell me that Lisa is much too nice and too well educated to become the wife of a vulgar brewer? Did he not add, she will make a better marriage, and render some one happy who will know how to appreciate her? It seems to me clear enough. M. Van Bruinkasteel refuse to marry Lisa! I wager anything he'll fly to my neck as soon as I begin to speak to him about it. Refuse to marry her? Not marry her? As if I had not observed why he always shows so much friendship for me, and is always at my side, so that the whole world must see it. It was M. Gansendonck here, and M. Gansendonck there; the hares he has sent—the partridges he has brought himself! and Lisa does not eat game. . . . So it was me he wished to please. Why? Certainly not on account of my fine eyes. No, no; he was preparing the way, because he wished to risk the great venture. I will help him; he won't be ill pleased."

Gansendonck rubbed his hands with joyous satisfaction, and was silent for some moments, the better doubtless to enjoy the flattering con-

victions over which he paused. After a little while he resumed, with a burst of laughing.

“Ah! ah! I fancy I see the whole village with faces as long as my arm. There’s the Baron offering his arm to Lisa; they are so brilliantly dressed that the villagers are obliged to close their dazzled eyes; four servants with gold lace and silver on their hats follow them; the carriage and four is there too. I, Peter Gansendonck, I walk at M. Van Bruinkasteel’s side; I carry my head high, and I regard those spiteful and envious tongues as the father-in-law of a Baron can and ought to regard such a stupid peasant mob. We arrive at the church; there are carpets and cushions; flowers are thrown at our feet; the organ plays, so that the windows shake; the ‘I will’ is pronounced at the altar, and Lisa starts in a postchaise with her husband through the village direct for Paris. . . . In the meantime, I sell or let the St. Sebastian, and when my son-in-law and my daughter return, I go with them to a fine chateau. Peter Gansendonck—that is to say,

M. Gansendonck, has played his cards well. He has only to give orders to eat, drink, hunt, ride on horseback. . . . But thinking of all these fine things, I have nearly knocked my nose against the door."

Speaking thus, he rang the bell. After a moment's waiting, a servant opened the door.

"Ah! Good morning. You have come no doubt to call on the Baron?"

"Certainly," answered the other, haughtily.

"He is not at home."

"What! Not at home?"

"That is to say, he is not visible."

"Not visible to me? That would be fine. Perhaps he is in bed?"

"No; but he will not see anybody. You wonder why. A black eye and face covered with scratches. . . ."

"That's nothing. He must not hide his face from me. With the Baron I am on that footing of friendship that I could speak to him even when he is in bed. . . . And I am coming in too. His denial does not affect me."

"Come in, then," said the servant, with a malicious smile. "Follow me. I will announce your visit."

"That's not necessary," growled the innkeeper. "Between us ceremony is out of place."

But the servant led him into a little ante-room, and obliged him, notwithstanding his resistance, to sit down and wait for the Baron's answer.

Half an hour passed away and the servant did not return. The innkeeper began to get terribly tired, and grumbled to himself.

"This servant also thinks he can laugh at me. Well, I shall put that down in my memorandum-book. He won't get grey in our service. He must go. That will teach him. . . . But I am listening enough to make myself deaf. I don't hear a straw move in the house. Can the servant have forgotten that he made me wait here? No, he would not dare to carry his impudence so far. Any way, I can't remain sitting here till to-morrow. Come, I shall go and see about it. . . . Ah, I hear the scoundrel !

He is laughing. What can he be laughing at?"

"Gansendonck," said the servant, "will you follow me? The Baron is so kind as to receive you. But I had some difficulty. If it were not for my intercession you would return home as you came."

"Come, come, what nonsense are you talking?" exclaimed the innkeeper, angrily. "Do you know to whom you are speaking? I am M. Gansendonck!"

"And I am James Miermans, at your service," answered the servant, with amusing *sang froid*.

"I shall know you again, rascal," said the innkeeper, ascending the stairs. "You shall pay for having made me wait a whole half-hour in that hole. You can pack up your things. You won't amuse yourself much longer with gentlemen like me."

The servant, without answering this threat, opened the drawing-room door, and announced, in a loud voice,—

"The landlord of the St. Sebastian!" after which he placed a chair for the infuriated

Gansendonck in the middle of the room, and rapidly descended the stairs.

M. Van Bruinkasteel was sitting at the end of the drawing-room, his elbow leaning on the table. His left eye was covered with a bandage, his forehead and cheeks bore the marks of his struggle with the brewer.

But what most attracted Gansendonck's attention, on his entrance, was the Baron's magnificent Turkish dressing-gown. The vivid and varied colours of this garment dazzled his eyes, and it was with an admiring smile that he exclaimed, even before greeting the Baron,—

“Good gracious, M. Victor, what a beautiful dressing-gown you have there !”

“Good morning, M. Gansendonck,” said the Baron, taking no notice of the exclamation. “You have doubtless come to inquire how I am. I am much obliged to you for your politeness.”

“Don't be offended, M. Victor ; but, before asking after your health, I should much like to know where you bought that dressing-gown ? It just suits my fancy.”

"Don't make me laugh, M. Gansendonck ; it hurts my cheeks so."

"I am not joking—no, no ; I am speaking seriously."

"A singular question ! I bought this dressing-gown in Paris."

"At Paris ! what a pity, Baron."

"Why ?"

"I should like to have one made for myself."

"It cost nearly two hundred francs."

"Oh ! I should not consider that."

"It would not suit you, M. Gansendonck."

"It would not suit me ? If I can pay for it, it ought to suit me. But let us leave that. Frankly, how are you, M. Van Bruinkasteel ?"

"You can see : a black eye, and a body covered with bruises."

"The scoundrel has just been arrested and marched off to the town. No doubt you will make him pay well for his shameless brutality ?"

"Certainly ; he must be punished. He watched for me, and assaulted me in my own place. The law visits such acts severely. However, I

should not like them to judge the affair according to the letter of the law ; for in that case he would have five years at least. His old mother came this morning to beg and entreat me to have pity. I am sorry for the poor woman . . . ”

“ Pity ! ” exclaimed the other, angry and surprised. “ Pity on those scoundrels ! ”

“ If the son is a scamp, what has the unhappy mother to do with it ? ”

“ She could have brought up her son better. The brute will only have what he deserves ; and let the peasants have a warning against treating gentlemen, like you and me, as if we were their equals : they carry their heads a great deal too high already. If I were in your place, I should spare no money in order to give the brewer a lesson, and the whole village with him.”

“ That’s my affair.”

“ Doubtless ! I know that, Baron ; each is master of his own affairs.”

This style of conversation apparently displeased the Baron, for he turned away his head,

and remained for some moments without speaking. Gansendonck, who, for his part, knew not what to say, walked up and down the room with an absent gaze, trying to find some means of introducing the subject of his daughter's marriage. He fidgeted his feet, coughed from time to time ; but his mind afforded him no assistance.

"And our poor Lisa," said the Baron, at last ; "the sight of the brewer's arrest must have caused her great pain. I imagine so : she has loved him from her childhood."

The innkeeper appeared to wake up abruptly as soon as Lisa's name, pronounced by the Baron, caught his ear. There, thought he, the way is singularly prepared. In order to attain his end, he answered, smiling,—

"Do you think she loves him, Baron? No, no ! There was a little love affair once ; but that was ended long ago. I put a stop to it, and turned the brewer out of the house. Just think, Baron, that heavy barrel of beer would willingly have married my Lisa !"

"He is one amongst many, M. Gansendonck, who might well show the same taste."

A joyous light sparkled in Gansendonck's eye. He started up from his arm chair, and said with a laugh, which was intended to be cunning,—

"Ah, ah! I have known that a long time. A sensible man guesses where the cow is when he sees her tail."

"The comparison is pretty."

"Is it not? We have seen clearly enough for a long time, Baron. But let's take the bull by the horns, for subterfuges are no longer necessary between us."

The Baron looked at him with a smile as quickly repressed.

"So M. Victor thinks seriously of marriage?" asked Gansendonck, triumphantly.

"How do you know that? I have even concealed it from my friends."

"I know everything, Baron. I have more resources in my wallet than you think."

"In fact you must be a conjuror, or you are

fortunate in your guesses. Whichever way it is, you have hit the right nail on the head."

"Let us be brief as to the rest, then," said the innkeeper, rubbing his hands. "Come, I'll make a sacrifice. I'll give my Lisa thirty thousand francs in money, and some land. She will have thirty thousand more at my death. We will sell the inn, so as not to be connected with the village peasantry . . . and I will come and live with you in your château. In this way you will receive the sixty thousand francs at once."

Saying these words, he rose, held out his hand, and exclaimed—

"You see that I don't make many difficulties. Come, M. Van Bruinkasteel, you agree to this marriage. Why, then, draw back your hand?"

"To this marriage? To what marriage?" asked the Baron.

"Come, come, shake hands with your father-in-law; and in a fortnight the first banns shall be published . . . No timidity, Baron, we are no longer children: your hand, your hand."

The Baron burst into a long shout of laughter.

Surprise and anxiety were depicted on Gansendonck's face.

"Why do you laugh, M. Van Bruinkasteel?" asked he, stupified possibly from joy.

"Come, M. Gansendonck," exclaimed the Baron, as soon as he could restrain his laughter, "have you lost all common sense? or what has come to you?"

"Did you not say you were going to be married?"

"Certainly, to a young lady from Paris. She is not as pretty as your Lisa; but she is a countess, and bears an ancient and honoured name."

A shudder passed over Gansendonck from head to foot; he said, with entreaty in his voice,—

"M. Victor, let us put joking on one side, if you please. Surely it is my Lisa that you are going to marry, is it not? I know that you like a laugh, and I have nothing to say against it, if it pleases you; but reflect a little, Baron. There are not many girls like our Lisa: beautiful as a flower of the field; educated of a respectable

family ; thirty thousand francs in her hand, and as many to expect. It's no laughing matter, and I don't know if a countess always offers as many advantages. A good opportunity passes away like a stork on the sea, and God knows when it will return."

"Poor Gansendonck!" said the Baron. "I pity you. You are not indeed in possession of your five senses. There is something wrong with your brain."

"What? What?" exclaimed the innkeeper, angrily. "But I will control myself. Perhaps you are joking. However, our misunderstanding must come to an end. I put the question plainly, M. Van Bruinkasteel—will you marry my daughter, yes or no? I beg you will give me a clear and plain answer."

"It is just as possible for me to marry Lisa, as for you to marry the shepherd's star."

"And why," exclaimed Gansendonck in a passion, "should you be too proud to care for us? The Gansendoncks are honourable folks, sir ; and they have many a fine piece of land

under the blue sky. Briefly, will you marry my daughter—yes or no?”

“Your question is ridiculous; however, I intend to answer it. No, I will not marry Lisa, neither to-day, nor to-morrow, nor ever! And go, leave me in peace, with your foolish fancies.”

Trembling with rage, and red with shame and spite, the innkeeper stamped violently on the ground, and exclaimed,—

“Oh, my question is ridiculous, I am mad! You won't marry Lisa? We shall see. The law is for everybody, as much for me as for a Baron. If I spend the half of my wealth I'll find out how to force you to do it. What! you will get into my house through a host of hypocritical pretences, you will make my daughter believe a tissue of falsehoods, you will compromise her good name, you will laugh at me . . . , and then you dare to say ‘I do not care, I am going to marry a countess.’ Things don't go thus, Baron; they're not so lightly got over with Gansendonck. After what happened yesterday you can't refuse, you must repair

my daughter's honour, or I will summon you before the Court, and follow you even to Brussels. You shall marry her; and if you don't now give me your promise, I forbid you to set foot inside my house. Do you hear?"

During this attack, the Baron looked at Gansendonck with a calm pitying smile, and with great *sang froid*; only at the conclusion of the threatening tirade a slight blush appeared on his face, an indication that anger or indignation struggled to overcome his calmness.

"M. Gansendonck, self-respect ought to make me ring the bell, and have you taken out of the house by my servants; but I am really sorry for your delusion. Since you wish it, I am going, once for all, to answer clearly and decisively all that you have said, and all that you might still say. In this matter, there is a lesson for you and me. We should both of us do well to profit by it."

"I wish to know," screamed Gansendonck, "whether you are going to marry Lisa—yes or no?"

"Have you no ears that you ask me so often the same thing? Listen, M. Gansendonck, to what I am going to say, and do not interrupt me, or my servants shall come and put an end to our ridiculous conversation."

"I'm listening, I'm listening," growled Gansendonck, grinding his teeth; "even if it kills me I can be silent, provided I have my turn after."

"You reproach me with having come to your house, and yet you very well know that it was you who invited me to go there, and that you urged me to make your daughter's acquaintance. What, then, have I done at your house which had not your sanction? Nothing. On the contrary, you always found out that I was not familiar enough with your daughter, and now you come and pretend that I ought to marry her. So it was a snare that you laid for me, and you led me on with a hidden design? Judge for yourself whether or not I ought to condemn such means and such presumptuous fancies. I came to see Lisa because her society was agree-

able to me, and because a real feeling of friendship attracted me to her. If this intimacy, by which I thought to honour you, has had, for all of us, a sad ending, it arises from this, that we have not heeded the saying, 'Frequent the society of your equals.' We have both acted without consulting reason, and are both punished. I have been beaten to my great shame, nearly beaten to death, by a peasant. You have become the jest of the village, and with a single blow behold the crumbling of all your castles in the air. Better repent late than never. I own that I have done wrong in frequenting, so familiarly, a village inn—in coming there and acting there as if I was your daughter's equal; and I feel now that if Lisa's nature was not very virtuous, my words and my manners might have tainted her fine nature."

"How dare you say such a thing?" screamed the innkeeper; "have you spoken dishonourably to my daughter, seducer that you are?"

"I laugh at your folly," continued the Baron; "but I want to forget for a minute longer, who

it is that dares to speak to me thus I have said nothing to your daughter but what in the world would be considered the most ordinary compliments, things suitable to the French language, and which perhaps do little harm to young ladies who hear nothing else from their childhood, but which in the inferior ranks of society corrupt the heart and deprave the manners because they are taken for truths, and because they thus excite the passions as if they were something more than empty compliments. In that I have been wrong ; it is the only crime, or rather the only error with which any one can reproach me, with the exception of you, who have made me do and say more than I myself liked. You threatened just now to forbid my coming to your house ; it is needless ; I have already resolved to profit by the lesson I have received, and not only to go no more to your house as a friend, but further to abstain from conducting myself towards other peasants, otherwise than in accordance with my rank."

"Peasants !" exclaimed Gansendonck, impa-

tiently, "What resemblance do you find between me and a peasant?—speak."

"Unfortunately for you there is indeed little. Your vanity has cast you out of the right track. Now you are neither fish nor flesh, peasant nor gentleman; through your whole life you will encounter hostility and railery; on the one side disdain, and pity on the other. You ought to be ashamed of so unreasonably despising your station. The peasant is the most useful man in the world, and when he is upright, when he has a kind heart, and when he does his duty, he deserves more than any other to be esteemed and loved. But do you know who make the peasant class the laughing stock of the world? Men such as you, who fancy that they raise themselves by looking down on their fellows; who imagine that they cease to be peasants as soon as they speak with contempt, and that it is sufficient to be decked with eagles' feathers to be indeed an eagle."

"Have I listened to you long enough?" exclaimed the innkeeper, starting up. "Do you

think, M. le Baron, that I came to your house to let you drag me in the dirt without saying a word?"

"One word more," added the Baron. "Shall I give you some good advice, Gansendonck? Write over your bedroom door, '*Shoemakers, stick to your benches.*' Dress yourself like other peasants, speak and act like people of your own station; seek for your daughter's husband a good labourer's son; smoke your pipe and drink your pint of beer in a friendly way with the villagers; and try no more to appear that which you are not. Remember, that when the ass puts on the lion's skin his ears always show, and that none will ever fail to perceive in your plumage and your note that your father was not a nightingale. And now go in peace with this lesson; you will thank me for it by-and-by. Do you still think you have something to say? Speak, then, and I will listen in my turn."

Gansendonck started up again from his chair, crossed his arms on his chest, and exclaimed,—

"Ah! you think you'll deceive me by your pretended moderation and tricks. No, no, that won't go down here. We shall see if there's no law to oblige you, M. le Baron. I will go and find your father, and show him how you have sullied the honour of my house. And if I have to write to Paris to the Countess, whose name you hide from me through fear, I will do it. I will prevent your marriage; and more, I will make known to the whole world what a false deceiver you are!"

"Is that all you have to say?" asked the Baron, with suppressed passion.

"Are you going to marry Lisa?—yes or no?" vociferated the innkeeper, shaking his fist.

The Baron put out his hand and pulled the bell violently twice. Hurried steps were immediately heard on the landing. Gansendonck quite trembled with anger and shame. The door opened, and three servants appeared in the drawing-room.

"Did M. le Baron ring?" they asked simultaneously, with emphasis.

“Show M. Gansendonck to the door,” said the Baron, as calmly as he could speak.

“What! You have me turned out of the door!” screamed the innkeeper, with concentrated fury. “You shall pay for it,—tyrant! impostor! seducer!”

The Baron made a sign with his hand to the servants, rose, and left the room by a side door.

Gansendonck was confounded, and knew not whether to curse or weep. The servants pushed him gently but irresistibly to the door, without troubling themselves to notice his imprecations.

Before he quite knew what was going on, Gansendonck found himself in the garden, with the door shut behind him.

For some moments he walked straight on, like a blind man who does not know where he is, until he struck his head against a tree, and then the shock seemed to awake him. Then, with quick steps, he went his way, storming and vowing vengeance against the Baron, in order to give vent to his sorrow and anger.

He paused in thought at the corner of a cop-pice. After having remained there some ten minutes or so, buried in sorrowful reflections, he began to strike himself with his fist, and his forehead with his hand, apostrophising himself at each blow.

“Stupid ass, shall you dare to return home ! Fool that you are ! You deserve the whip, stupid lout ! You’ll know now what barons and gentlemen are. A *white waistcoat* and *yellow gloves* !—a fool’s-cap would have been more suitable ! You’re simpleton enough—idiotic enough—to throw yourself on to a windmill. Hide yourself ; get into the ground, with your shame, clownish peasant ! clownish peasant !”

At last, having poured forth on himself the flood of his anger, tears came to his relief : and then, weeping and sighing, full of shame and bitter grief, he dragged himself towards home.

Suddenly, in the distance, he saw his servant running towards him, uttering cries that he could not understand otherwise than as a pressing entreaty to hasten.

“Master! master! oh, come quickly!” screamed Jack, as soon as he was within hearing. “Our poor Lisa is in convulsions.”

“My God! my God!” sighed Gansendonck. “Everything comes upon me at once; and everybody is forsaking me; you too, Jack!”

“Forget that, sir,” said the servant, with an expression of sorrowful pity. “I will stay with you as long as I can be of any use to you But come, come!”

Both the men walked quickly towards the village.

X.

The Spring has come again—the joyous Spring ;
Again the banks with clustering flowers are spread ;
The wild bird dips upon his wanton wing,
The child of earth is numbered with the dead.

MRS. NORTON.

THE winter is over. The trees and plants are already beginning to unfold their leaves in the soft warmth of the sun, and the birds are making their nests, and singing their sweet spring songs. Everything is resplendent with youthful vigour, everything smiles on the future as if no dark cloud ever obscured the beautiful blue sky.

In a back room at the St. Sebastian is a young invalid. She is seated there perfectly still, and yet breathing with difficulty. The slightest movement is pain to her. Her face is pale and transparent, but on each cheek burns a bright red spot, telling only too plainly what

disease is wasting away that young life. Plunged in a sad reverie, her slender fingers are stripping off the leaves of some daisies that have been brought to amuse her, as a plaything to a child. She drops the withered flowers ; her head falls back on the cushion ; her earnest gaze is fixed above, Poor Lisa !

A little behind the girl Gansendonck is sitting, his arms crossed on his chest. His head is hanging down, his half-closed eyes are fixed on the ground ; his whole features and his attitude betoken deep sadness, remorse, and shame.

What were the unhappy father's thoughts at the sight of his only child passing away before his eyes ? Did he reproach himself ? Did he acknowledge that his vanity was the destroyer which had laid her low ?

Whatever they may have been, his face was furrowed with deep lines of suffering, and his withered cheeks and languid movements showed plainly enough that the last sparks of spirit and hope were extinct within him.

His daughter's lightest sigh made him shudder—her painful cough rent his bosom—and when she turned towards him her suffering face, he trembled as if he read in her dull and heavy eyes the word *murderer* ! And yet now that paternal love pure and earnest, was separated in his heart from the bonds of pride, he would joyfully have welcomed the most cruel death, if thereby he might prolong his child's life for one short year !

Poor Gansendonck ! everything in the world had smiled upon him once. Such happy dreams of grandeur and pleasure had wooed him all his life to their deceitful mirage ! And now, like a dumb shadow, he was seated by his dying child—cast down and trembling, like a criminal at the gallows.

If this constant torment of conscience—this gloomy dread of another's death—had aged his body, they had also uprooted in his heart the last remains of pride and vanity, and singularly softened his character. Now his dress was modest and unpretending ; his speech affable ;

his attitude full of humility. Bowed down under the pressure of his great grief, his life had now but one aim, that of soothing his daughter's sufferings; his efforts but one object, the liberation of Karel.

Gansendonck had been seated for half an hour in the same position, without moving, and breathing softly, for fear of disturbing his daughter. At last Lisa raised her head with a weary sigh, as if the pillow was not comfortably placed. Gansendonck went to her, and said, with loving sympathy,—

“Dear Lisa, doesn't it sadden you to be always alone in this room? Look, the sun is shining so brightly outside; the air is so sweet and fresh. I have put a chair and some cushions in the garden. Would you like me to take you out in the sun? The Doctor said it would do you good.”

“Oh, no; leave me here,” said the girl, sighing; “this cushion is so hard.”

“The quiet of this room is painful for you; and you require a little change.”

"The quiet!" repeated the girl, thoughtfully. "How calm and tranquil it must be in the grave."

"Put away these gloomy thoughts, Lisa. Come! Must I help you? No one will see you. I will shut the garden door. You shall sit behind that beautiful beech hedge. You shall see how the flowers are coming up. You shall hear how well the birds are singing. Do it for my sake, Lisa."

"Very well, father," answered the young girl. "To please you, I will try if I can go as far."

Resting both hands on the table, she raised herself, slowly. The tears fell fast from her father's eyes, when he saw Lisa tottering on her feeble limbs, and trembling all over, as if the effort was a painful one. She looked ready to sink under the weight of her own body, though it was so very thin. Without saying a word, Gansendonck took her under her arms, and carried rather than supported her. In this way they proceeded through the inn; and after many pauses for rest, reached the garden where



"Take courage, dear Lisa; the beautiful summer has begun. The soft, fresh air will strengthen you. You will get well, my child!"

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Lisa, exhausted and coughing violently, sank into the arm chair.

After Gansendonck had arranged the cushions behind her back, and under her head, he seated himself on a chair by her side, and waited in silence till she had recovered a little from her exhaustion. Then he said, in a comforting tone, though still weeping,—

“Take courage, dear Lisa; the beautiful summer has begun. The soft, fresh air will strengthen you. You will get well, my child!”

“Oh, father, why deceive me?” said the girl, sighing, and shaking her head. “All who see me—you, like the rest, father—weep and lament over my lot. This is the fact, is it not? Before the feast-day comes, I shall be laid in the cemetery.”

“My child, don’t sadden yourself by such a gloomy thought.”

“A gloomy thought! There is no happiness in this world, father. Ah! if I were in heaven! There, there is health, joy, eternal love.”

“Karel will soon be back, Lisa. Did you not

say yourself, that you should be well then? He will know how to comfort you. His loving voice will make you forget your bitter suffering, and give you new strength."

"Six months yet," said the girl, despairingly, and raising her eyes as if she was speaking to God; "six months yet."

"Not so long, Lisa. Jack went to Brussels yesterday, bearing a letter from our burgomaster to the gentleman who is interceding with the authorities for us. Everything leads us to hope that we shall get a diminution of Karel's sentence. In that case he will be set at liberty at once. Heaven only knows whether this very afternoon Jack may not bring the glad news of his approaching deliverance! Lisa, my child, does not the thought of that revive you?"

"Poor Karel!" said Lisa, dreamily. "All these long months already! Oh, father, I have been very wrong! I.... But he who is innocent, what must he not be suffering in his gloomy cell?"

"No, Lisa; the day before yesterday I went to see him in prison. He bears his lot patiently.

If it were not that your illness grieves him, he would consider himself happy."

"He has suffered so much, father, you will love him, won't you? You won't spurn him? he is so good."

"Spurn him!" exclaimed her father, in a trembling voice. "I have begged his pardon on my knees. I have bathed his feet with my tears. . . ."

"Oh father! and he?"

"He pressed me in his arms, kissed me, comforted me. I wanted to excuse myself; to tell him that my pride alone was the cause of his sorrow; to promise that my whole life should be an expiation. He shut my mouth with a kiss. . . . A kiss which, like balm from heaven, filled my heart with hope and energy; and gave me strength to await God's will with less anxiety. Blessings on the generous heart of him who returns good for evil."

"And he has forgiven me, too; has he not, father?"

"Forgiven you, Lisa! What harm have you

done? Ah! if you are suffering, it is only in consequence of my fault, my poor child."

"I—am I innocent, father? Was it not my frivolity which wounded Karel's heart, and drove him to despair? But he has forgiven all. He is very kind."

"No! no!" exclaimed her father; "he has nothing to forgive, for you are as pure as a lily. . . . Even when my mad pride forced you to act imprudently, and everything concurred to inspire him with distrust, even then he rejected the least suspicion of you, and said, with perfect trust in his eyes, 'My Lisa is pure; I know she loves me.'"

A sweet smile brightened the girl's face.

"Ah!" she said, "this knowledge will soften my pain. When I am in heaven, I will think of him. I shall smile on him wherever he goes, until he comes to me there."

The joyous tone of Lisa's voice encouraged her father to make an effort to turn her mind from the sad presentiments which had taken possession of her.

“And you don’t know,” said he, in a playful manner, “all he told me the day before yesterday, about the beautiful garden he is going to make for you, as soon as he is free. All the loveliest flowers in profusion ; paths and winding walks ; grass plots, arbours, ponds! . . . And whilst all this is being done, he will take you to Paris. He will show you all the most beautiful things in the world. He will cheer you with his love, with pleasure, and all manner of delights. . . . Oh, Lisa, just think of it! You will be Karel’s wife by that time. Nothing in the world can separate you then. Your life will be a heaven of happiness. And Karel wishes me to come and live with you both, and his mother, at the brewery. He will be my son. You, Lisa, will have a tender mother. By gentleness and kindness I will regain the love of the villagers. We will be respected. We will be loved. We will love one another. We shall be united by the bond of brotherly love, and we shall spend our lives peaceably. But Lisa, my child, what’s

the matter? You are trembling; are you not well?"

The girl made another effort to smile, but it was evidently only forced. She took her father's hand, and said in a feeble voice, which increased in weakness as she continued,—

"Father dear, if God had not called me home, no doubt your words would have made me well; but, alas! what could save me now? . . . death, which I always see before my eyes . . . like something that I can't describe—a cloud . . . something which beckons me. And even now a cold shiver is passing over me; the air is too cold . . . Water, water, on my face! Oh, father, dear father . . . I believe . . . that I am going to die! . . .

Pronouncing these sad words, she closed her eyes, and sank back, senseless.

Gansendonck fell on his knees before his daughter, raised his arms to heaven, whilst the tears poured from his eyes; but soon he awoke to the necessity of trying something to

revive her. He began to chafe her hands, sprinkled water on her face; and as consciousness returned to the sufferer, her father, half mad with joy, watched on her face the signs of awakening from a swoon so like death. She opened her eyes slowly, and looked round her in surprise.

“Not yet! still alive,” she said, sighing. “Oh, father, take me back to the house. My head goes round, my chest is on fire; the air hurts my lungs, the sun makes me ill.”

As if Gansendonck wanted to snatch his child from the death which threatened her, he seized her in his arms and carried her indoors.

Lisa was reseated near the table, her head reposing on a cushion. Her father wished to speak again some words of encouragement and hope; but she interrupted him, saying imploringly,—

“Don’t speak, dear father, I am so tired; let me rest.”

Gansendonck silently returned to his seat.

Half an hour passed without any movement : no sound betrayed the presence of human beings in the room, when suddenly a carriage was heard to stop at the door.

“There is Jack, Lisa ! there is Jack ! I know the horse’s step.”

A spark of hope lighted up the eye of the dying girl. The servant entered the room. Lisa seemed to be trying to collect all her strength in order to learn the glad news. She raised her head and looked at Jack. The master started forward and exclaimed,—

“Well—well, Jack ?”

“Nothing. The gentleman who was going to speak to the authorities has started for Germany”

A stifled cry of distress broke from Lisa. Her head fell back heavily on the pillow ; the tears followed one another down her pale cheeks.

“Alas ! alas !” she said, in a voice so weak that it could scarcely be heard. “He will see me no more in this world !”

An hour after, poor Lisa was carried to bed by her father, never again to leave it in life. A few days more she lingered, and then the troubled spirit was at rest.

XI.

HE WHO SOWS THISTLES REAPS THORNS.

ONE beautiful morning a young peasant was walking rapidly along the road between Antwerp and Breda. He was out of breath, and the perspiration stood in great beads on his forehead. However, unutterable joy shone in his eyes, and the quick glances which he threw over the country, or into the spotless azure of the sky were bright with gratitude to God and love for nature. His steps were light. From time to time an exclamation of joy escaped from his lips. One would have thought that he was hastening with eager impatience to reach some place where great happiness awaited him.

And in fact it was Karel the brewer, whom a remission of his sentence had set inopportunistly at liberty.

Now he was returning to the village, his heart full of happy dreams. He was going to see his Lisa ; to comfort her, to make her well. For was it not his condemnation, his imprisonment, which were bowing the young girl down under the weight of a crushing sorrow, and wasting away her life ? And his deliverance, his return, were they not the infallible cure for her malady ? Oh, yes ; he was going to find her—his own Lisa—to surprise her by his unlooked for appearance ; to say to her, “Grieve no longer, my Lisa. Here I am, your faithful Karel. Imbibe strength from my love ; raise your head ; be hopeful ; all our troubles are over. Face the future with courage and joy. Smile at life ; it promises us so many happy years.”

And his good old mother ! how he would recompense her for her tenderness and sympathy. In fancy he already saw her—he heard her utter a cry of delight, running to meet him ; he felt her arms round his neck, her kisses on his cheeks, her tears falling on his face And he

smiled lovingly at the sweet vision, whilst the word mother! mother! fell from his lips.

Oh, the young man was happy! How he revelled in the sense of freedom! His recovered liberty alone filled him with gladness! With what delight he breathed the perfumed air! What strength and vigour were diffused through his frame! The morning sun shed his golden rays over the fresh green of the fir trees, and decked all nature in a gorgeous festal robe. Dreaming of a happy future—his heart bounding with gratitude to God—summoning before his mind's eye all whom he loved—sighing with love—smiling with happiness—the young man walked more and more rapidly till about half a league from his native village.

There he stopped suddenly, shuddering as if some dark apparition had struck him with terror and consternation.

Three gentlemen had just appeared ahead of him from a bye-road; one of the three was M. Van Bruinkasteel.

It was difficult to tell whether these gentle-

men had observed the young man ; but at any rate they did not look at him, and walked on towards the village.

Karel was saddened. He did not wish at that moment to enter into conversation with the Baron ; for he felt his blood boil, and knew how dangerous the meeting would be for him if his enemy should address to him one insulting word. And yet he could not wait, the impatience which hurried him towards his beloved Lisa and his aged mother was too strong to be restrained.

After a moment's thought, Karel made up his mind : he sprang from the road into a path which adjoined it and, running across several fields, reached another road which, although being a long way round, would also take him to the village.

* * * * *

Through the village the solemn sounds of a funeral bell are heard. . . . In the cemetery a recently opened grave yawns, each stroke of the bell re-echoes in the grave, as if a dull voice

were rising up from the hungry earth, calling for her prey.

Save these mournful sounds, a gloomy silence prevails over the whole place. Everything is still, except that a few old people are walking, with their prayer-books in their hands, on their way to church.

In the distance advances a sad *cortège* Young girls dressed in white are bearing the body of their companion, dead in the flower of her age; others similarly attired walk at the side, ready to receive the precious burden. All the girls of the neighbourhood are following, bearing in their hands flowers or branches of box—all, even to the little ones, who as yet do not understand what is meant by the word *dead*! Many are weeping bitterly—all are walking with drooping heads—sorrowing for Lisa, so innocent, and yet, alas! so unfortunate! On the coffin are scattered flowers—roses and lilies—the emblems of maidenly purity. They smell so fresh and sweet, they show so well in all their brightness on the white pall Beneath, too,

there lies a flower,—a lily,—destroyed by the worm of sorrow, faded and withered, the unhappy victim of pride and vanity!

Only three men follow the coffin closely. On one side walks Jack ; on the other, Francis, the blacksmith. Weeping in sorrow and from pity, they are supporting a third, who staggers like a tipsy man. His face is hidden in his hands, the tears stream through his fingers, his chest heaves with convulsive sobs. Poor Gansendonck ! guilty father ! you dare not look on that coffin ! Conscience and remorse rend your heart. You are trembling with anguish and shame. But I seek not to read your heart ; your grief inspires me with respect. I forget your fatal pride, and I, too, shed a tear of compassion over your poignant suffering

They draw near the cemetery. There is the clergyman ready to read the last prayers of the Church

But what strikes this silent assembly with terror ? Why that cry of anguish which bursts simultaneously from every bosom ? What terrible

apparition makes those young girls tremble? It is Karel! He pauses a moment, as if struck by lightning. He fixes a wild look on the *cortège*, whose progress is suddenly interrupted by his earnest gaze. The young man understands what is going on. He hastens up, hair standing on end. He throws himself on the coffin. He pushes the young girls violently away. He tears off the white pall. He bruises his hands with the coffin-nails in vain endeavours to tear off the lid. He calls his Lisa—he screams—he laughs

At last the men drag him by force away from the corpse. But a new incident tears from him a cry for vengeance—a cry so horrible that everybody shudders. What has he discovered that he bounds on like a madman, casting aside every obstacle with a fierce cry of triumph towards the object of his fury.

Good heavens! it is the Baron at the window of an inn.

Oh, misery! the distracted Karel draws a knife from his pocket. How the blade shines

in the sun ! He rushes, screaming, to the inn. A murder will be committed But no, he stumbles against the threshold, and falls like a stone, with his head on the flags. Hands are raised to heaven. All are trembling But Karel does not rise. He remains stretched on the floor as if death had found in him a new victim.

The Baron, his enemy, is the first near him. He raises the young man compassionately. He, too, experiences at that moment the pangs of remorse. He hears a voice saying to him, "Your folly has brought about this misery which you see around you." Jack runs up. The two together bear Karel to a seat, bathe his forehead and chest with water ; but he remains on the chair still and pale as a corpse

Whilst this is going on, the clergyman murmurs the last prayer over the grave ; the earth falls with a dull sound on the coffin

Karel has recovered from his long swoon. The Baron tries to comfort him. Jack speaks to him of his mother ; but the young man no longer knows either friend or enemy ; a strange

and terrible fire shines in his eyes ; he laughs, he appears happy he is mad! . . .

Dear Reader, if you chance to pass through the village where these sad events took place, you will see, before the brewery, two men seated on a wooden bench, playing together as if they were children. The youngest has a sad and senseless countenance, but the fire of madness shines in his eye ; the other is an old servant, who takes care of the young madman with affectionate pity, and endeavours to amuse him.

Ask the servant the cause of his master's madness, the good Jack will relate to you sad things. He will show you the grave where Gansendonck sleeps, near his child, and be sure he will end by quoting this proverb,

PRIDE IS THE SOURCE OF ALL EVIL.

THE END.

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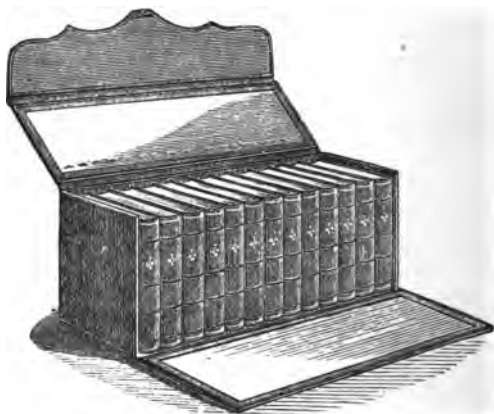
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